

A Study of Elementary Educators' Perceptions and Experiences Related to the
Implementation Process of The Responsive Classroom Approach

by

Tammy L. Mild

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education
in Educational Leadership

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

May, 2018

A Study of Elementary Educators' Perceptions and Experiences Related to the
Implementation Process of The Responsive Classroom Approach

by

Tammy Mild

I hereby release this dissertation the public. I understand that this dissertation will be made available from the OhioLINK ETD Center and the Maag Library Circulation Desk for public access. I also authorize the University or other individuals to make copies of this thesis as needed for scholarly research.

Signature:

Tammy Mild, Student **Date**

Approvals:

Dr. Karen H. Larwin, Dissertation Advisor **Date**

Dr. Kathleen Aspiranti, Committee Member **Date**

Dr. Patrick Spearman, Committee Member **Date**

Dr. Sherri Harper Woods, Committee Member **Date**

Dr. Salvatore A. Sanders, Dean of Graduate Studies **Date**

©

Tammy Mild

2018

Abstract

Administrators and educators face increasing challenges to prepare students for standardized test while simultaneously supporting each child's behavioral, social, emotional and physical growth and wellbeing. The philosophy and teaching practices of The Responsive Classroom Approach offers educators tools to bring balance to the whole child. The current investigation examines the implementation efforts of seven educators in a small rural school district. This school district has a building-wide (Positive Behavior Intervention Support) system in place, while a small group of educators are using the Responsive Classroom Approach. The current investigation utilizes a mixed-methods approach. A short self-assessment reflection was used as a warm-up activity, and Q methodology provided the basis to gain quantitative and qualitative results. Results indicate that all response variance loaded on one perspective, explaining more than 70% of the variance in the Q-sort. The current study revealed an increase in educator job satisfaction related to Responsive Classroom implementation. Participants also revealed that collegial collaboration was one of the strongest factors related to successful Responsive Classroom implementation.

Keywords: The Responsive Classroom Approach, social emotional learning, Care Theory, implementation

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study.....	4
Significance of the Study.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Limitations of the Study.....	6
Summary.....	7

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework.....	9
Teacher Turnover Rates.....	10
Unrealistic Expectations.....	11
Social Connectedness.....	14
The Responsive Classroom Approach.....	16
Components of the Responsive Classroom Approach.....	18
Creating a Culture for Learning.....	19
Creating a Classroom Community.....	21
Five Social Skills.....	23
Setting Continuous Improvements Goals.....	28
Fidelity of Implementation.....	32
Job Satisfaction.....	36
Conclusion.....	37

CHAPTER THREE

Research Questions.....	41
Design of Study/Methodology.....	41
Development of a Concourse.....	42
Q-grid.....	49
Sample of Participants.....	49
Procedure: The Warm-Up Assessment.....	50
Procedure: The Q-Sort Activity.....	51
Procedure: The Semi-Structured Interview.....	52
Summary.....	52

CHAPTER FOUR

Overview of Procedures.....	53
Description of the Participants.....	54
Q-Sort Analysis.....	61
Qualitative Feedback.....	67
Research Question #1.....	67
Research Question #2.....	70
Research Question #3.....	73
Research Question #4.....	76
Research Question #5.....	79
Summary.....	82

CHAPTER FIVE

Summary of Findings.....	83
Discussion of Findings and Relation to Existing Research.....	84
Research Question #1.....	85

Research Question #2.....	87
Research Question #3.....	91
Research Question #4.....	95
Research Question #5.....	105
Implications.....	109
Limitations of the Study.....	110
Recommendations for Future Research.....	111
Conclusion.....	113
REFERENCES.....	114
APPENDICES	
Appendix A.....	121
Appendix B.....	126
Appendix C.....	132
Appendix D.....	136
Appendix E.....	138
Appendix F.....	142
Appendix G.....	144

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family: my husband Brad, my best friend and the most loyal man I know; and my three beautiful daughters Madison, Grace, and Emma, for their encouragement, love, and support. My family has offered continual inspiration, compassion, and much needed laughter throughout this process. I am blessed to be a part of such a wonderful family.

In addition, I dedicate this dissertation to Richard Baker and Diana Baker, my amazing parents, who have been my biggest supporters, celebrating each milestone throughout my life; to my Aunt Betty and Uncle Ron, who have offered advice, edited countless papers, and listened to my struggles; and to my grandparents, Janice Baker and my late grandfather, Joe Baker, the best grandparents a person could ask for, who have taken pride in each step of my journey. Without the love, support, and encouragement of my family, I could not have achieved this dream. Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Lori Davis, former special education director of West Middlesex Area School District, whose relentless drive to think out of the box to meet all students' needs provided professional inspiration and a partner in leadership as I became an elementary principal. Her friendship and passion for education will be forever missed.

Acknowledgements

So many people have been instrumental in helping me to become an educator. Professionally, I have been inspired by dedicated educators who continuously strive to meet the needs of the children with whom they work. These professionals gravitate toward professional development opportunities, are confident in their abilities, have strong educational philosophies grounded in research, and continually learn and grow.

As I reflect on my educational journey, I am thankful for the people who have cheered for, supported, and challenged me along the way. I would like to acknowledge Dr. Kathleen Strickland, former Slipper Rock University Dean of College of Education, whose passion for children and teaching inspired and sparked my passion for literacy and learning; Marlynn Clayton, founder of Responsive Classroom, who saw something in me as an educator and chose me to train to be a Responsive Classroom consulting teacher; Jodi McErlane, fellow educator and Responsive Classroom consulting teacher, who was the best partner to learn and grow with as I began my Responsive Classroom journey; Kevin Briggs who calmed my nerves countless times throughout the Educational Leadership program; Mark Hogue for his continual support through stats and the dissertation process; Dr. Jeremy Lynch, associate professor, Slippery Rock University who has offered encouragement and guidance; my close friends, coworkers, and cheerleaders Melissa Benton, Marianne Fleis, Michelle Morelli, Amy Peterson, Staci Rococi, Emily Wherry, and Ann Wiles; my Y.S.U. cohort who were the best group of people I could have asked to work with over the past three years; and Leslie Reedy, my editor, whose guidance and prompt feedback allowed me to complete this work on time. I would also like to give special thanks to Dr. Karen Larwin, my dissertation chair, whose

unending support for her students has been evident with each step of this dissertation. She is an inspiration to the educational profession who has challenged me educationally and provided continual support throughout the doctoral program, the research, and writing of this dissertation. Her passion for students is unmatched. In addition, I thank my committee Dr. Kathleen Aspiranti whose attention to detail strengthened this work, and Dr. Sherri Harper Wood and Dr. Patrick Spearman whose expertise and positive energy lifted my spirits when the writing was difficult.

I would also like to thank the amazing people I have worked with in Greenville Area School District, West Middlesex Area School District, and the Center for Responsive Schools. The people who make up the culture and community in these districts and the center have had a tremendous impact on children, learning, and the adult community. Finally, to all of the children I have had the opportunity to learn and grow with throughout my career, I say thank you. I have been blessed to learn from amazing children and educators with a wide range of gifts, talents, challenges, and unique needs.

Chapter 1

Background

This dissertation research has grown out of my personal implementation experiences as a classroom teacher and, on a larger scale, as an elementary administrator. A thorough review of literature has also impacted the direction of this research. Through my experiences with the implementation of the Responsive Classroom Approach (RCA), I have found the recommended three-year implementation window (Personal conversation, Sara Filliant, March 15, 2018) to present a number of obstacles. The implementation plans are often misunderstood and poorly developed. Having extensive experience with this approach as a consulting teacher and classroom practitioner, an explorative research design was decided upon to alleviate this researcher's personal biases. After an intense search, a mixed method approach of phenomenology and Q methodology was determined to best suite research endeavors.

Over the past two decades, a myriad of changes in education have occurred from Outcomes Based Education (OBE), Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP), No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and now, Common Core. Through all of these changes, the constant that has provided structure and consistency through the ever-changing initiative and federal mandates is the RCA. The seven principles and 10 teaching practices of this approach provide tools to support students with a seamless academic and social curriculum.

Dissatisfaction among educational professionals within the teaching profession has risen over the past two decades (MetLife, 2011). A number of factors contribute to job

dissatisfaction including lack of perceived administrative support, meaningful professional development opportunities, positive collegial relationships, positive school culture, supportive work environments, autonomy, and collaboration (Armstrong, 2012; Bogler, 2001; Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2012; Moomaw & Pearson, 2005; Ward, 2015). A lack of tools to create well-managed environments conducive to social-emotional learning adds to declining educators' professional job satisfaction. In addition, educators often lack the tools to support academic achievement in a test-driven society. Providing supports for educators leads to more effective teaching, thereby, improving student achievement (Johnson et al.).

The RCA provides structures and tools to create well-managed classroom environments where the social and academic curriculums are integrated (Charney, 2002; Denton, 2005; Denton & Kriete, 2000; Northeast Foundation for Children, 2007). For this approach to permeate a district there must be fidelity of implementation, administrative support, meaningful professional development, a reflective culture among educators, and an expectation for continuous improvement of teaching practices. For educators to grow in an environment of continuous improvement they must have the autonomy to set challenging goals and create plans for their individual professional improvement. The RCA provides the foundation to support educators in their quest to meet the needs of students.

While the effects of the RCA have been established concerning educators' self-efficacy, academic performance, social learning, and effects of Morning Meeting on community building, research surrounding the process of implementation and the perceptions of educators who have navigated implementation for the recommended five-

to-seven-year process is lacking. This dissertation study examines the experiences and perceptions of educators who are implementing the RCA in self-contained primary classrooms in a small rural district in western Pennsylvania.

Achieving successful implementation of the RCA in a school district involves a review of many factors such as administrative buy-in and support, school culture, educator motivation, professional development opportunities, capacity of staff to implement, and collegial collaboration time. The purpose of the proposed study is to examine implementation factors and their effects on educators using the RCA. These factors will be explored through the perspectives of the educators using this approach.

The RCA offers 10 components that support educators as they manage classrooms, provide structures for social-emotional and cognitive learning, and develop relationships with students. When components are implemented with fidelity, there are increased opportunities for joining academic and social learning, classroom organization, appropriate teacher language, creating structures for effective classroom management, creating risk-free learning environments, and using clear expectations when delivering instruction. The current study reveals the journey of perceived Responsive Classroom Approach implementation from educators' perspectives through the implementation process. This information will be used to uncover factors that impede and support implementation efforts as determined through educators' self-assessment and educators' detailed descriptions of their lived experiences.

Educators' responsibilities are immense. Their responsibilities extend beyond each child's learning experience to the learning of each child's parents and caregivers, the teaming and experience of the adult community in the school setting, and the learning of

themselves. Each educator must look at his or her own learning. The goal is often haphazardly stated as how to become a lifelong learner. Educators often throw this term around without truly embracing the depth to which this statement must be understood and become the driving force which extends and helps each educator to grow into a better teacher every day. Educators who believe in lifelong learning will never reach their destination. The infinite knowledge a human can attempt to possess provides endless opportunities for learning and growing.

A true educator will never reach their destination. As questions are answered and knowledge received, new questions are formed, and new understanding gained. This form of learning sparks passion and desire to support learning for students. When an educator is under the impression that they have acquired the knowledge necessary to be the best educator they can be, an opportunity can be missed to continue learning and growing. The best scenario is when educators and children are all learners and teachers coexisting and growing simultaneously. Learning is a social experience.

Statement of the Problem

It is necessary to understand the implementation process of the RCA, to inform administrators, teachers, and The Center for Responsive Schools. The aim of this research is to uncover the factors that support and hinder implementation efforts in a small rural school to support future implementation efforts in other districts.

Purpose of the Study

The proposed study adds to the current literature surrounding teachers' implementation of the RCA with an attempt to extrapolate information surrounding

perspectives and lived experiences of educators as they have grown in their knowledge and use of the RCA, uncovering factors that aid and impede implementation efforts.

Significance of the Study

The primary goal of this approach is to balance the social and academic curriculum while meeting the needs of the whole child. This study provides insight to support future implementation efforts and reveal information to illustrate the need for Responsive Classroom practices in elementary classrooms to achieve balance between the social and academic curriculums. Dissertation findings provide a basis for dialogue surrounding professional development, administrative support, effects on students, effects on educators' professional job satisfaction, and the value of collaboration. Information obtained in this study may spark future exploration of RCA implementation. The findings may have the potential to support future teacher education instructional practices for the Center for Responsive Schools.

Research Questions

The primary focus of the research is to reveal elements of successful implementation of the RCA as shared through the lived experiences of educators in a rural school in Western Pennsylvania.

1. How do educators support their personal Responsive Classroom professional development efforts?
2. Has RCA implementation had an impact on job satisfaction?
3. From a practitioner's perspective, what supports are needed to aid implementation efforts?
4. From a practitioner's perspective, what impedes implementation efforts?

5. How does a district's administration impact implementation efforts?

Definition of Terms

Fidelity of implementation – “Implementation fidelity refers to the degree to which an intervention or program is delivered as intended. Only by understanding and measuring whether an intervention has been implemented with fidelity can researchers and practitioners gain a better understanding of how and why an intervention works, and the extent to which outcomes can be improved” (Balain, Booth, Carroll, Patterson, & Wood, 2007, p.1).

Northeast Foundation for Children also known as Center for Responsive Schools – “Since 1981, Center for Responsive Schools, Inc. (CRS) has grown from a small laboratory school and consulting group to the nationally recognized developer of the *Responsive Classroom* approach to teaching” (Responsive Classroom, 2017, p.1).

Responsive Classroom - “an evidence-based approach to teaching that focuses on engaging academics, positive community, effective management, and developmental awareness” (Responsive Classroom, 2017, p.1).

Social-emotional learning– “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply knowledge, attitude, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions” (CASEL, 2017, p.1).

Limitations of the Study

The generalizability of the current study is limited to small rural schools and may not be applicable to urban and suburban school settings. The focus is on the implementation experiences of general education inclusive, early primary kindergarten through third-

grade educators. The experiences of these educators may not be transferable to upper elementary educators. Upper elementary educators typically experience different demands, some of which include an increase in standardized testing, which places a stronger focus on content-driven instruction leaving limited time for a social and academic balance to curriculum. Educators in self-contained settings can focus their RCA efforts on one class of students over an entire school day. In departmentalized settings, educators must divide their focus on multiple groups of children with only portions of the day to devote to community building.

The goal of the researcher is to reveal successful implementation elements and uncover obstacles that impede implementation efforts. This research can provide necessary information to inform future programming for The Center for Responsive Schools and also provide information to support schools that are in the process of adopting the RCA.

Summary

This study explores the lived experiences of rural, elementary educators through their journey of Responsive Classroom implementation revealing what has aided and impeded Responsive Classroom implementation efforts in each participant's classrooms. This research will explore the impact Responsive Classroom has on the social and academic curriculums as accounted by the educators in this study.

The Northeast Foundation for Children (NEFC) has developed a wide range of professional development tools to support educators including: workshops, coaching, books, videos, newsletters, and website resources. This research reveals educators' accounts of the value of the professional development tools as they approached

implementation. In an effort to battle dissatisfaction among educators, the concept of social connectedness is explored, highlighting the benefits for children and educators alike.

In Chapter 2, the review of literature will reveal the dissatisfaction which has grown out of continual, unrealistic expectations placed on educators ultimately leading to increasing teacher turnover rates. The RCA will be explored, and each component clearly defined. This research reveals the impact of social-emotional learning on academic acquisition, care theory, the value of positive school culture, the need for educational goal setting, and the importance of fidelity of implementation.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Over the past decade, a growing body of research has detailed the impact of the RCA on academic acquisition, social and emotional learning, the impact of connectedness, and effects on problem-solving (Blahus, 2013; Rimm-Kauffman, 2006). The purpose of the current research is to expand the knowledge available surrounding this comprehensive approach to learning, unpacking the Responsive Classroom implementation efforts of educators in a small rural school in Western Pennsylvania. This study uncovers the impact of the RCA and the journey of educators who have been using the Approach for five or more years in self-contained classrooms.

Theoretical Framework

When traversing the landscape of literature, there is value in understanding the theories that serve as foundations of research. The RCA is based on the ethics of caring. The moral theory, *ethics of care*, identified by Carol Gilligan is based on the relational interdependence of human life (Rice, 2001). Children are born into the relational experience of being cared for at birth. They develop and grow through relational experiences throughout their lives (Noddings, 2012). The ethics of care extends to relational experiences in school.

A climate in which caring relations can flourish should be a goal for all teachers and educational policymakers. In such a climate, we can best meet individual needs, impart knowledge, and encourage the development of moral people. Every teacher is a moral educator, and social/moral issues should be discussed in every class as they arise. A climate of care and trust is one in which most people will

want to do the right thing, will want to be good. We need to spend time in our classrooms talking about the moral problems we all face – the temptation to cheat, to feel envy, fear, and anger – and ways to manage them. (Noddings, p.777)

Psychologist Carol Gilligan's (2003) book, *In a Different Voice*, described caring as “[The ideal of care is thus] an activity of relationship of seeing and responding to need, taking care of the world by sustaining the web of connection so that no one is left alone” (p.62). As RCA is further dissected, care theory will be evident in each component of the approach. It is evident in the relational approach to classroom community building; school wide community building; and outreach to relationship building between educators, parents and the greater community.

Teacher Turnover Rates

Professional job dissatisfaction is a growing challenge facing educators in schools across America (Armstrong, 2012; Metlife, 2111; Strauss, 2013; Walker, 2012; Ward, 2015). Continuity of teaching professionals allows for educators to build a relational culture among the teaching staff. Continual turn-over in teaching staff forces administrators to continually hire. Educators, new to the profession, often lack experiences gained over time. This lack in continuity disrupts the coordinated instructional practices that provide vertical and horizontal articulation of curriculum across school districts (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2011; Johnson et al., 2012). Disjointed teaching can have a detrimental impact on student achievement.

Teacher attrition is a growing epidemic facing schools costing billions of dollars annually across America (Billingsley & McLeskey, 2008). In addition to the financial loss is the detrimental effects students face with new educators. With the decrease in

teachers' job satisfaction; it is imperative that administrators look at the factors that cause satisfaction and dissatisfaction, if the education profession is going to attract qualified educators who will instill the value of learning in children (Armstrong, 2012; Greene, Jensen, Madden, Maloon, & Stark, 2014). These factors often vary from one school to another (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2008).

Administrators must look for ways to retain effective educators. The RCA provides a structure and strong professional development opportunities to guide educators. Educators using the RCA reported stronger self-efficacy when compared to educators not using the approach (Rimm-Kauffman, 2006). Rimm-Kauffman (2006) also reported when deeper levels of Responsive Classroom implementation were present there was a positive correlation shown with the levels of increase in disciplinary self-efficacy.

Unrealistic Expectations

Beginning in the late 1990s, there have been many changes in education. Over the past two decades the United States has seen an increase in standardized curriculum and standardized testing. (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2009; Wood, 2007). The unrealistic expectations of NCLB (2001) and the Core State Standards have left schools scrambling to raise academic expectations, adding to professional dissatisfaction. The push to increase academic expectations has left many children lacking the skills they desperately need to reach their full potential (Grogan, 2013).

Educators do not know what the future will ask of the children they are teaching. The job market is continually changing. Many of today's jobs were not even thought of a few short years ago (Krulick, 2017); for example: E-waste management coordinators, who

continually develop ways to dispose electronic waste; nanotechnologists, who fix microscopic electronics; and SEO specialists, who work with search engine optimization to strengthen websites (Krulick, 2017). In addition, a number of the jobs of the future have not yet been created. According to leaders in the business world, some of the skills children will need to possess for success in years to come include: “teamwork, problem solving, interpersonal skills, oral communication, listening, personal development, creative thinking, leadership, goal setting, writing, organizational effectiveness, computation and reading” (Grogan, 2013, p.204).

Curriculum must be fluid. It should continually change to meet the needs of children, not unrealistic federal mandates. Educators who know their children best need the autonomy to differentiate curriculum to meet each learner’s needs. This autonomy has been lost to the federal mandates of changing programing including NCLB, Race to the Top (RTTT), and, now, Common Core (Ward, 2015). Educators are often forced to use prepackaged curriculums stamped with the latest federally mandated fad. The companies that produce these curriculums take the professionalism of education out of the hands of the people who know the learners best, the educators.

The expectation to meet these unrealistic standards is higher than ever, at a time when the number of struggling students is on the rise (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). The diverse learners who make up classrooms across America make the business of educating children increasingly difficult (Chadwick, 2004). “No educational system in the history of the world has ever accomplished what American educators are now called upon to do” (Dufour & Marzano, 2011, p.6). With the test-driven educational environments students are facing, it is essential that educators be cognizant of each child’s developmental stages

and abilities to provide them with developmentally appropriate instruction (NAEYC,2003; Wood, 2007). Now, more than ever, it is essential that educators have a clear understanding of each child's developmental needs (Wood, 2007).

Based on the recommendations of NAEYC (2003), assessments should be used to gain a deeper understanding of particular children or groups of children. NAEYC (2003) also recommended that assessments should be varied including a wide variety of assessments, some of which include performance-based, observation, and documentation, all differentiated to meet individual student needs. Assessments should also be based on real-world experiences. Unfortunately, many of the standardized tests students across America are expected to pass are not following the guidelines set forth by associations that focus on developmental needs on students. Now, more than ever, it is essential that educators have a clear understanding of each child's developmental needs (Wood, 2007).

In today's fast paced world, children often suffer from the emotional deprivation of hectic over-scheduling; single parent homes; working parents; endless hours in front of television and video games; and cell phone overindulgence. In a growing number of homes, gone are the days of a mother at home putting dinner on the table for daily family meals. Children often miss the nurturing, developmentally appropriate social and emotional inter actions which foster feelings of security.

When children have their physiological needs, safety needs, and needs for social connectedness met, they have a foundation to thrive (Maslow, 1943). For many families, the basic physiological needs along with safety and social connectedness needs are not met in children's homes. When these children enter classrooms, they must be met by educators who have the tools to support their unique learning needs. When educators

lack the tools to support learners, they experience dissatisfaction, and a growing number of educators leave the profession (MetLife, 2011).

As a result of the disconnected family function, educators must be charged with the task of fulfilling physiological, safety, and psychological needs of students. For a child to be ready to learn, these basic needs must be met. School leaders must provide educators with tools to meet these needs and create a safe haven from the disconnectedness and stressors of life for their students. The RCA provides the philosophy, teaching techniques, implementation structure, and support to transform classrooms into safe havens for children to learn and grow (Charney, 2002).

The RCA provides the foundation to handle many of the unrealistic expectations imposed on educators and children. This is done by providing clear expectations using developmentally appropriate instruction. The structure provides educators with the language to support students and help them see their own potential. This approach gives students choices in their learning enabling them to be self-directed learners who are intrinsically motivated to learn (Denton, 2005). The quality of instruction has a direct impact on student learning; therefore, improving each educator's knowledge and skills would have a direct positive effect on the day-to-day instruction that is provided (Dufour & Marzano, 2011).

Social Connectedness

A student's school experience including academic and social growth is enhanced with strengthened positive teacher-student relationships (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Rimm-Kauffman, 2006). The relationship between teacher and student is one of the many essential components needed for an

educator to grow and experience classroom success. The social aspects of teaching and learning top the list as necessary for educators' professional job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2012). This relationship is necessary for children as well (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Rimm-Kauffman, 2006; Rimm-Kaufman & Sandilos, 2017).

When students believe they are known by their teachers and fellow students for the positive qualities they possess, there are opportunities for children to experience belonging and significance (Audley & Casto, 2008; Dalton & Watson, 1997; Hurst & Otis, 1999; Jones & Kahn, 2017; NEFC, 2006). Knowing and connecting with students opens doors for educators to provide instructional differentiation and motivation. Teaching is an art where skillful educators can detect the nuances that make each student the individuals they are, skillfully using this knowledge to create instructional opportunities that may not be obvious to less skilled educators (Graves, 2006). This is the goal educators must strive for as they teach.

Competent educators know the curriculum needed in their discipline to instruct students. Knowing curriculum, however, is only one component of a successful educator. Educators must also know their students and the specifics of child development (NAEYC, 2009; Wood, 2007). Many pre-service educators have limited child development coursework. When educators do not have an understanding of developmentally appropriate practices, they have grave potential of falling into an unbalanced focus on teaching curriculum, not children (NAEYC, 2009). The RCA is dedicated to knowing the whole child, developmentally, socially, emotionally, and academically.

The RCA supports learning that is developmentally appropriate for each learner. In addition to developmental learning, social and emotional learning must be at the forefront of curriculum integrated with academic learning (Jones & Kahn, 2017; Wood, 2007). Creating a balance between the social and academic curriculums supports educators' and students' overall well-being. Attention must be given to education of the whole child and not limit educational focus to cognitive acquisition at the expense of social-emotional learning (Jones & Kahn, 2017). In classrooms where Responsive Classroom components are implemented, students display stronger pro-social skills and report stronger connections with educators (Rimm-Kauffman, 2006). There also appeared to be a decrease in students' anxious responses to new learning and activities when compared to students in classrooms not using Responsive Classroom practices (Rimm-Kauffman, 2006).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs places belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization at the top of the hierarchy (Commons & Harrigan, 2015). For a child to achieve their greatest potential, all basic physiological needs and psychological needs must be met. Being known can support a child in the achievement of self-esteem and self-actualization. Maslow, when writing about belonging, said, "Any good society must satisfy this need, one way or another, if it is to survive and be healthy" (Maslow, 1970, p. 44). The RCA provides the structures to help students fulfill their needs and achieve their greatest potential. The relationships developed between learners, educators, and school staff can create an inclusive environment or an exclusive place for students to learn (Valenzuela, 1999).

The Responsive Classroom Approach

The Responsive Classroom components were developed by NEFC (2005). The basis for the development of the RCA is a seamless cohesion of social-emotional and academic learning. This approach extends beyond the classroom walls and encompasses the entire school-wide practices in an effort to support academic and social-emotional skill building (Audley & Casto, 2008). Social-emotional learning provides children with needed belonging, significance, and productive fun. Each child must be known independently, free from judgment. There is a vast difference between seeing a classroom of students and knowing each individual child. There is also a vast difference between knowing individual students and knowing what is significant about students and their lives (Graves, 2006). Relationship-building should be at the heart of all teaching and learning experiences. Students need to be known, respectfully spoken to, participate in community building, learning experiences, believe in and trust their teachers, and know that they can count on their teacher's word (Sullivan & Thompson, 2008).

The RCA is built on the belief that children's learning is enhanced when attention is given to academic and social-emotional skill building. Research reveals an increase in math and reading scores in schools where the RCA had been used for a minimum of three years according to the work of Rimm-Kauffman (2006). Responsive Classroom Approach provides deliberate approach to use and incorporate this learning into classrooms and across the school-wide environment (Casto & Audley, 2008). Social and emotional learning provides children with needed belonging, significance, and productive fun.

The effects of The RCA have been established concerning educators' self-efficacy, academic performance, social learning, and effects of Morning Meeting on community building. Research surrounding the process of Responsive Classroom implementation and the perceptions of educators who have navigated implementation is lacking. The current dissertation study examines the experiences and perceptions of educators who are implementing the RCA in self-contained primary classrooms in a small rural district in western Pennsylvania.

Components of the Responsive Classroom Approach

The aim of the RCA is to create an environment where children are socially and emotionally safe. Social and emotional environments for children must be built on a culture of acceptance and respect. This approach may reduce many of the effects of the bullying currently seen in many classrooms (Levine & Tamburrino, 2013). Relational approaches are needed to teach the social skills children are often assumed to possess, (Levine & Tamburrino, 2013). The philosophy, in which the RCA is built, exemplifies relationship building with children, adults, families, and communities (Davis & Yang, 2005).

The guiding principles according to NEFC (2007) are as follows:

- The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum;
- How children learn is as important as what they learn: process and content go hand in hand;
- The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction;
- To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn and practice specific social skills. Five particularly important skills are cooperation, assertion,

responsibility, empathy, and self-control (often referred to in the Responsive Classroom Approach with the acronym CARES);

- Knowing the children we teach – individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach;
- Knowing the families of the children we teach is as important as knowing the children we teach; and
- How we, the adults at school, work together, which is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community. (p.3)

This philosophy encompasses every aspect of the student’s school experience. This philosophy transforms the interactions of academic and social learning for educators and students. It provides a comprehensive approach to learning where the learners are actively engaged in a culture of growth.

Creating a Culture for Learning

A founding principle of the CRS is the notion that learning is social (NEFC, 2007). Children learn how to interact with the world around them from the people in their lives. Classrooms provide vast opportunities to create a positive social, learning environment or stifling, emotionally stark places where learning is inhibited. There is a growing body of research to support the positive impact social-emotional learning can have on children’s development and later success in life (Jones & Kahn, 2017). When classroom culture is grounded in social-emotional learning, a culture of safety in asking questions, taking risks, and making mistakes creates an environment for optimal cognitive and social growth. Rimm-Kaufman (2006) highlighted the academic gains of the RCA citing gains in both mathematics and reading achievement.

Decades of research in human development, cognitive and behavioral neuroscience, and educational practice and policy, as well as other fields, have illuminated the major domains of human development – social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, academic – are deeply intertwined in the brain and in behavior. (Jones & Kahn, 2017, p. 4)

These domains are all integral to the learning process. When there are strengths or challenges in one domain this will have a positive or negative effect on the other domains (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Each domain has facets of the others (Jones & Kahn, 2017, p. 4). This research reveals the need for social-emotional learning in conjunction with cognitive, linguistic, academic learning. Educators cannot focus on one domain to the detriment of the others.

Children are not encoded with fixed social-emotional intelligence (Jones & Kahn, 2017). This intelligence is developed over time as they interact with people around them. Schools must be charged with education that incorporates social-emotional learning into classrooms daily. There are many examples of integrated social-emotional learning including in classrooms, some of which include: setting expectations that children will greet each other in the morning, teaching children how to play a game and lose a game, and teaching children how to respond when a friend hurts your feelings.

It is important to be mindful of the influence and impact adults can have on the children in their care (Noddings, 2012; Noddings, 2010; Rice, 2001). When children feel safe and cared for, they have the opportunity to grow in their understanding and participation in caring relationships. Educators have daily opportunities to create a culture of open dialogue with children. This dialogue can provide a basis for the

development of sympathy, which can grow into empathy. Empathy is defined as a cognitive comprehension of others' feelings (Noddings, 2010). Children are not born with an understanding of empathy. This learning takes place when positive modeling and dialogue are present.

Educators can provide daily opportunities for children to practice social interactions and reflect on their experiences, teaching children to self-assess and reflect on their interactions with others and modify inadequate attempts to interact with others. Social-emotional growth is supported when children are taught replacement behaviors for inappropriate social mistakes. Educators have daily opportunities to confirm morally appropriate behaviors which also support social-emotional growth (Noddings, 2010).

Culture, unlike curriculum, schedules, evaluations, and resources cannot be imposed. Culture is created with the dynamic spontaneous day-to-day interactions of the people who make up a community. The people who comprise a school community are often unaware of the nuances that create culture. The culture and climate of a school have an immense impact on the learning and experiences of students in school. The culture and climate have more impact than the department of education, administration, and school boards (Grogan, 2013). Because culture is, to a large extent, who people are as human beings, it is difficult to change.

Creating Classroom Community

A community is a collection of people who develop traditions, celebrations, ceremonies, connections, and commonalities. The people of a community depend on each other's connectedness for survival. These experiences transcend time and bind the people of the community. The RCA builds relationships and community in classrooms

(Davis& Yang, 2005) and has the ability to bond students, families, community leaders, volunteers, and educators.

When a district implements a new school-wide program or intervention, attention must be given to the culture of the school. Responsive Classroom has a profound impact on how educators work with children and the adults in their school. This approach changes a school's culture. Cultural change does not come from outside the school walls; cultural change happens within. Having a lasting impact on cultural change in a district can be one of the most difficult tasks of reformers (Grogan, 2013).

A positive school and classroom culture must provide a safe environment where children feel known and cared for in order for children to take risks and grow (NEFC, 2016). School and classroom rules can embrace and portray the expectation that everyone who enters the school environment will care for and respect others (Grogan, 2003). The rules lay the foundation for each school's culture and climate. Observation and listening are two primary tools educators must embrace as they strive to connect with students. Educators must find out what each child's learning and social goals are for themselves, actively observe children's interactions with each other, find out what excites and frustrates learners, observe how they engage in activities throughout each day including physical activities and cognitive stamina, learning styles, expressive and receptive language, and language processing (NEFC, 2016; Wood, 2007). A narrow focus on students' cognitive abilities is never enough. Children must be known as whole people.

Culture is created and learned as students interact with each other and adults (Nieto, 2010). As children grow socially they must participate in dialogue and discourse (Nieto,

2010). It is the responsibility of educators to encourage children to think, ask questions, and challenge ideas. The components of the RCA provide the tools for educators to create a positive culture (NEFC, 2005; NEFC, 2007).

People often hold on tight to the culture they know, whether it is good or bad. A known culture is often better than an unknown culture. Change is difficult. Change must take place from within and without (Grogan, 2013). Teachers and administrators must act together for cultural change to occur. The RCA sets the tone and provides the tools to support this change over time.

Five Social Skills

The five social skills needed by children to be academically and socially successful are: cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control, (CARES). Because the strongest academic gains are made during social interaction, the development of cooperation is an essential skill for learners (NEFC, 2007). In addition, positive assertion is necessary as students learn to ask questions, share opinions, and problem solve. Teaching children to be responsible for their social and academic learning leads to intrinsic motivation and a desire to control their own actions. As children learn to interact, educators use thoughtfully planned experiences throughout each day to model and teach empathy. Empathy is a fundamental skill needed to develop strong, supportive, risk free environments for social and academic learning to occur. As classroom community is being built educators provide opportunities for the development of self-control. Learners must develop self-control to focus on their learning and social interaction (NEFC, 2007). These five social skills are explicitly taught throughout the 10 teaching practices of the RCA. These practices include:

- Morning Meeting – where the entire class, including the teacher, joins to greet each other, share news in an attempt to get to know each other, create bonds socially and academically through a class game, song, or activity, and prepare for the day with daily news and announcements; at Morning Meeting, children participate in specially designed and scaffolded instruction which incorporates social and academic learning (Davis & Kriete, 2014). Morning Meeting sets the stage for the rest of each day’s learning.
- Rules – grow out of each student’s hopes and dreams for the learning that will take place during the school year; if each child is going to have an opportunity to learn and grow, the class will need rules to support the learning that will take place; teachers and students work together to create three to five rules that will exemplify how students will care for self, others, and the school environment so each child can accomplish their social and academic goals;
- Interactive Modeling – a teaching practice to show one specific way an action will be accomplished, i.e., sharpening a pencil, lining up, walking to the circle; students are invited to actively participate in noticing and understanding expected behaviors with deeper understanding;
- Positive Teacher Language – the attention to detail in each educator’s use of verbal and nonverbal language to promote each child’s learning and self-discipline; positive teacher language models respect for all learners.

When educators model respect, it supports the development of a respectful community of learners;

- Logical Consequences – provides structures for educators to support students to make reparations and fix misbehavior while maintaining the dignity of the rule breaker; logical consequences are respectful, realistic, and relevant to the misbehavior and aimed at helping children problem-solve to fix misbehavior;
- Guided Discovery – educators provide students with opportunities to develop responsibility while exploring materials and opening doors to all the possibilities a material has for learning; educators facilitate discussions to help students explore the expected care for, use, naming, and potential for materials that have many purposes in a classroom;
- Academic Choice – a time for self-selected and teacher-negotiated differentiated learning where students become intrinsically motivated to learn; at academic choice, students choose from open-ended activities and make choices to meet their unique learning needs and interests;
- Classroom Organization – a structure for setting up the physical space of a classroom that takes into account the social, developmental, and academic needs of students with spaces for individual, small group, and large group learning; classrooms become the children's space, filled with their work and fine-tuned to meet each class's individual and collective needs;
- Working with Families – knowing and respecting the families of the children in an effort to gain insights and support a strong connection

- between school and home; educators continuously seek opportunities to break down the walls between school and home encouraging families to volunteer in the classroom, communicate with their children about school, and feel comfortable working with the school educators and staff; and
- Collaborative Problem Solving – a variety of strategies for problem-solving with students including: conferencing, role playing, class problem-solving meetings, and behavior plans; problem-solving is modeled and empowers children to recognize problems and solve them in cooperative, productive ways (NEFC, 2007, p. 4).

The teaching practices of this approach provide the structures to maximize and integrate the social and academic learning (NEFC, 2007). The approach focuses on the quality of interactions between students and adults, and students with each other. Researchers caution that there are many factors that affect teacher-student interactions: educational level of teachers, class size, and years of experience of the teachers who implemented more Responsive Classroom practices; these factors were associated with stronger improvements in the quality of interactions (Abry, Brewer, Larsen, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2013).

Morning Meeting is one of the components of the RCA that provides the structures for educators and students to know each other well in addition to providing opportunities for infusion of academic reinforcement (Bechtel, 2004; Bechtel & Kriete, 2002; Berry Wilson, Dousis, & Kriete, 2010; Clayton, Fisher, Henry, & Porter, 2006; Correa-Connolly, 2004). Morning Meeting is comprised of four components. Academic learning is weaved throughout the four components which include: greeting, sharing,

activity, and news and announcements (Almon & Miller, 2009; Bechtel & Kriete, 2002; NEFC, 2007). This structure allows opportunities for skillful educators to incorporate academic and social learning in a safe supportive environment (Bechtel & Kriete, 2002; Clayton et al.).

The components of Morning Meeting allow for opportunities to support student questioning and thinking skills. The sharing component provides students with a platform to share their lives (Bechtel & Kriete, 2002). Others are encouraged to share respectful comments or ask clarifying questions to learn more about the sharer (Bechtel & Kriete, 2002). Teachers manage sharing with sign-up charts or designated days for each child to share (Clayton et al., 2006). When students share about experiences they have had in their lives, they make connections with others. These connections help children to feel known and help them to know their classmates. Sharing aids the community building efforts with daily opportunities for children to learn about and forge bonds with fellow classmates and their teachers (Clayton et al.)

The sharing component of Morning Meeting provides a setting for learning about and practice of self-control while providing opportunities for students to focus on topics and delve deeper into their thinking with questions (Bechtel & Kriete, 2002). Students have opportunities to articulate responses to thoughtful questions and focus on the thinking of others. Sustaining focus on a student-initiated topic provides practice experiences that can be drawn on when a focus on academic learning is needed. Developing the skills of focus and self-control allows for learning to occur in core curricular areas. Learners need to focus on curriculum and delve deeper with probing questions to expand their thinking and ultimate learning (Grogan, 2013).

It is important for educators to know their students immediately (Graves, 1994). Students must be known socially, cognitively, emotionally, and developmentally. For students to feel known, educators must take advantage of conversations with students about their interest in school and outside of school (Graves 1994). Morning Meeting provides educators opportunities to observe students as they interact with academic and social challenges. The insights gained from observations provide educators with the needed knowledge to fine tune future instruction (Clayton et al., 2006).

The RCA has the potential to strengthen relationships between students and educators, (Chiu & Rimm-Kaufman, 2007). Students experiencing inequality have the potential to benefit from stronger relationships with their teachers. This is seen across a number of risk factors and differing socioeconomic conditions where equity can be provided under inequitable circumstances (Chiu & Rimm-Kaufman, 2007). In an effort to achieve equity in the face of inequality, children need to be appreciated for who they are on a personal, human level. Students must be known as individuals separate from their peers. The only way to erase or minimize inequality is to maximize the human aspects of the children being taught. The philosophy of the RCA provides the foundation to level the playing field for the neediest children.

Setting Continuous Improvement Goals

The most imperative goal for any administrator should be to set the stage for the learning in the district to go “off the chart” (Grogan, 2013, p.198). This kind of learning cannot be limited to students alone, but should aim to include educators, parents, and the administrators. It is essential for administrators to spark the burning desire in all of their employees to have their learning curve to go off the chart. Finding ways to excite and

motivate staff to devote their lives to this form of learning can be difficult. This takes administrators who have a knack for knowing their staff's individual personalities, strengths, challenges, interests, and motivators.

As described by Fullan (2008) in *The Six Secrets of Change*, administration must first start with loving their educators and staff. This is shown by listening to and providing engaging, purposeful professional development opportunities, meaningful work, and a focus on building positive working relationships with colleagues and the entire school community. Social connectedness is the glue that bonds culture and community in schools. As children learn from each other, so do adult learners. Learning is a social act. Building opportunities for purposeful learning in the adult community can be just as powerful for adult learners as it is for children.

Skillful administration will facilitate team development, provide resources, time, and any other supports necessary to create an environment of learning for all. One of the guiding principles of the RCA speaks to this need: "How we, the adults at school, work together is as important as our individual competence: Lasting change begins with the adult community" (NEFC, 2007, p. 3). Strong leaders provide collaborative learning with a clear focus (Fullan, 2008). This clear focus must be on building a strong, supportive community, culture, and ways to address students' needs, which are not limited to academics, alone.

When teachers are focused on their students' passing standardized tests, they often hyper focus on covering state mandated standards and curriculum. This narrow focus on mandated standards and curriculum causes educators to neglect the social emotional learning that is essential for student growth and development. Narrowly focused

educators forget they should be inspiring a desire to learn in their students. Curriculum is dictated to educators, and, in turn, educators dictate to students. The short-term goal of passing the test may be accomplished, but students will miss out on the long-term learning that comes from comprehensive curriculums that teach the whole child (Grogan, 2013). When we narrowly focus on passing the state mandated test, it is important to note that we “have won a battle and lost the war” (Grogan, 2013, p.205). When the focus is solely on achieving standardized test success, it is easy to lose sight of what matters most, the children.

When children enter preschools and kindergarten classrooms they bring with them an innate desire to learn about the world around them. They are full of questions and have a burning desire to seek answers through play. In many classrooms we teach these young explorers, rich with questions, to dislike learning. We quiet their desire to learn with narrow-focused, test-preparatory curriculums that stifle their life-long learning (Almon & Miller, 2009; Grogan, 2013).

Educators must continually ask themselves, if they strive to be ranked number one with a narrow focus on academics, are they sacrificing valuable learning that is not tested? Often times, “learning is what you do when you’re not graded for it” (Grogan, 2013, p. 206). Educators must not sacrifice the social connectedness that comes from knowing their learners and the personal connections that lead to job satisfaction and learning for all.

Administrative support is essential to provide professional development opportunities and time for educators to learn and grow as a community of learners. When collaboration opportunities and supports are seen by educators, educator collaboration increases

(Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2007). Collaboration is beneficial as educators begin to rely on each other to implement strategies and work through implementation struggles. Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2007) explored the features and predictors of teacher collaboration and the effects the RCA has on teacher collaboration. This research resulted in the conclusion that teachers' positive perceptions of school-wide shared values equate to stronger collaboration. Teachers who used resources and incorporated more components of the RCA appeared to partake in and place stronger value in collaboration practices. As seen in the work of Rimm-Kauffman and Sawyer (2007), schools implementing the RCA saw an increase in professional collaboration when compared to schools not implementing Responsive Classroom practices.

On the forefront of administrators' priorities should be the idea of creating a culture for intrinsic motivation for learning that propels a school forward. Administration, educators, children, and parents need to be encouraged to ask questions and seek answers. The culture must instill lifelong learning for all, children and adults, alike. "The culture is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act" (Grogan, 2013, p.198). Administrators' and educators' actions can have a profound impact on the learning of all.

This learning community must be extended to invite and welcome parents, guardians, and children. Adults at school must foster respectful, cooperative, inclusive relationships between school and home for children to experience optimal growth opportunities (Davis & Yang, 2005). The RCA approach stresses the importance of knowing and involving each child's parents or care givers in their student's learning environment (Davis & Yang, 2005). The school culture must be one of inclusion: welcoming and inviting all to

come together to learn and support children. Creating a culture where all learners, parents, educators, and children, are intrinsically motivated in a supportive community, provides the optimal environment and opportunities for growth.

Fidelity of Implementation

Research has been conducted on the benefits of the RCA including: teachers' self-efficacy, academic performance, social learning, and effects of Morning Meeting on community. These studies looked at the RCA through a quantitative research lens. Rimm-Kauffman (2006), a leading researcher in the field, has studied the contributions of the RCA for more than a decade. In a longitudinal analysis of the effects of this approach, it was revealed that there was a correlation between Responsive Classroom implementation and students' social performance, academic performance, and students' positive attitudes about their classroom community (Brock, Chiong, Grimm, Nishida, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008).

To reach the full potential of this or any program the issue of fidelity of implementation must be of primary concern. Within the five- to-seven-year implementation recommendation of the NEFC, a number of issues must be considered including: administrative buy-in and support, school culture, educator motivation, professional development opportunities, capacity of staff to implement, and collegial collaboration time. The research questions proposed in this dissertation aimed to uncover the factors that aid and factors that hinder implementation efforts in a small rural district. For this approach to provide optimal impact for students, it is vital that administrators know the factors that impact implementation efforts and plan accordingly to support classroom and school wide success.

The current study uncovers the lived experiences and perceptions of educators who have taken the journey of Responsive Classroom implementation. These educators have shared the nuances that have impacted their efforts with colleagues, students, parents, administration, and in the classroom. They share their personal experiences along the way including professional development successes and failures. This dissertation walks the reader through the struggles and successes that have impacted educators' journeys from initial exposure, professional development opportunities, and through full implementation.

A school-wide approach to community building intensifies the positive impact on students' social, emotional, and cognitive growth (Audley &Casto, 2008). Comprehensive approaches yield greater benefits (Elias et al., 2003). There is reason to believe school-based prevention programs that are implemented with fidelity can have a positive impact on many concerns facing children including health, social and cognitive learning (Elias et al.).

During the implementation phase of a school-based prevention initiative, there are a number of factors to consider. These include: “(a) teaching children to apply SEL[social, emotional, learning] skills and ethical values in daily life through interactive classroom instruction and providing frequent opportunities for student self-direction, participation, and school or community service, (b) fostering respectful, supportive relationships among students, school staff, and parents, and (c) supporting and rewarding positive social, health, and academic behavior through systematic school-family-community approaches” (Elias et al., 2003, p. 470). Professional development for educators and strong leadership

are essential when implementing successful social-emotional learning programs (Durlak et al., 2008).

There are great possibilities to achieve equity for children when attention is devoted to high-quality instruction and strong leadership. In many successful schools, the structures of the RCA lay a framework dedicated to many of the techniques and characteristics used in high-quality instruction. Educators who have strong buy-in and implementation fidelity experience a transformation to the day-to-day interactions with students as they engage learners in meaningful social and academic learning (Blahus, 2013).

Ten years of observational research conducted in more than 2,500 pre-kindergarten through third-grade classrooms across the country led to conclusions that there was inconsistency across the board in almost every classroom setting. The differences included the amount of time spent in direct instruction, differentiated instruction, curriculum development, interaction between educators and children, and interactions amongst children (Pianta, 2003).

There is a growing need for educational reform based on improving social and instructional contexts in schools, with emphasis placed on the creation of environments that are responsive to the needs of children. The focus should be on the improvement of social development in the context of authentic situations. There needs to be collaboration between the field of psychology and the educators that deliver instruction to children (Pianta, 2003). The RCA would offer the needed framework to accomplish the desired outcome.

It is necessary to keep in mind that the faculty and staff create the quality of each school (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Professional development must be dedicated in

developing the educators to be the best they can be for the sake of all learners. To attain desired results, particular attention must be given to the professional development and the effects on the quality of implementation.

To obtain optimal outcomes, the components of Responsive Classroom must be implemented with fidelity. School districts adopting this program must devote efforts to each educator's professional development. The RCA is an all-inclusive approach that supports educators with tools to address classroom management, classroom organization and instruction based on academic and social-emotional learning. When implemented with fidelity this approach has the potential to transform educators' practices (Abry et al., 2013). A self-assessment is one tool that can measure awareness to the approach or transformations to teaching. The assessment was developed by the NEFC to chart educators' progress and help to provide a format for goal setting (NEFC, 2009). The focus on social-emotional learning pays off in the development of supportive communities of learners comprised of students with the skills to care for and respect each other (Abry et al.).

Research reveals the essential role administrators play in the implementation and fidelity of implementation, (Abry et al., 2013). A review of literature surrounding the RCA highlights the importance of fidelity of implementation to achieve the positive effects of social and emotional learning, (Abry et al.). To attain desired results, particular attention must be given to the professional development and the effects on the quality of implementation.

Professional development is offered in week-long summer institutes by the Center for Consulting Schools. There are options for professional resource libraries to support

implementation efforts and coaching offered to schools. Certified consulting teachers can also provide in house trainings, which can take a variety of formats and include day to day coaching opportunities (Responsive Classroom, 2017). The Responsive Classroom Assessment Tool is another option to support implementation efforts. It is a self-assessment, rating-system rubric comprised of 125 Responsive Classroom indicators (NEFC, 2009). The Responsive Classroom Approach Assessment Tool provides an inexpensive aid to consistency and fidelity of implementation for administrators and teachers (NEFC, 2009).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a “pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). There is reason to believe the effects of the implementation of the RCA can have a significant positive impact on primary educators. This is a potential solution to the growing dissatisfaction of many educators in the field (Rimm-Kaufmann & Sawyer, 2004). Educators who taught in schools following their first year of Responsive Classroom training reported stronger satisfaction with their profession. In contrast, educators who taught in schools that were not implementing Responsive Classroom philosophies reported lower satisfaction with their profession. It is recommended that full implementation of Responsive Classroom practices takes three to five years (Rimm-Kaufmann & Sawyer, 2004).

Amid the cycling of educational trends, it’s important to remember the long-term answer to a stronger, more robust, and more rigorous education for all children, as most everyone who spends time observing children in the classrooms knows, is better teachers. The most skilled...have been those who have known what is

appropriate for their students from a developmental point of view. (Wood, 2007, pp. 4-5)

To gain the full effects of the RCA for educators and students, attention must be given to sustained implementation over multiple school years.

Conclusion

Classrooms that were emotionally supportive in the beginning of the school year resulted in higher levels of instruction later in the year. Associations were made between classrooms that began the year with instructionally supportive environments and strong levels of emotional support later in the year. In addition, there is a correlation between the use of Responsive Classroom practices and emotionally supportive classrooms (Arby et al., 2013). With implementation of the RCA there is an opportunity to improve humanity through education. When social and emotional learning is daily integrated with academic learning, students who suffer from adversity have opportunities to achieve belonging, significance, and have fun. Ultimately, these children gain an opportunity to achieve equity. Educators must pay particular attention to every part of their instruction right down to the words they use (Denton 2007).

An educator's language is a powerful tool (Denton, 2007). Students reap the benefits of their teachers' language in academic skills acquisition, the development of self-control, and membership in a supportive community of learners. An educator's language permeates a classroom letting students know the vision for learning, a sense of trust that an educator places in learners, and the dialogue that helps students know their strengths and challenges. This language provides the basis to propel a student's learning (Denton, 2007). "How parents and teachers talk tells a child how they feel about him. Their

statements affect his self-esteem and self-worth. To a large extent, their language determines his destiny” (Ginott, 1972). Language provides the avenue for creating who each person becomes. Language provides the avenue for the understanding of each individual’s sense of how they interact with others, and how they think, learn, and grow (Denton, 2007). Underestimating the power of language can be vastly detrimental to the development and success of learners.

Educators are faced with unique opportunities to help children overcome obstacles by providing opportunities in the classroom, while simultaneously reaching out to parents, volunteers, community leaders, and the children themselves (Davis & Yang, 2005). Parents, volunteers, and community leaders should be invited to participate and learn through informational letters, newsletters, planning meetings, and informational meetings. Opportunities are provided for volunteering, donating supplies, and learning and growing with children and educators. Responsive Classroom does not just shape the way educators run their classroom and create communities. The RCA transforms educators as people. It is not something to be done, but a philosophy that shapes who an educator becomes as a human being. The RCA has the ability to change the world for the children and educators who have an opportunity to experience it.

The philosophy of the RCA exemplifies relationship building with children, adults, families, and communities. It encompasses every aspect of the student’s school experience. These philosophies transform the interactions of academic and social learning for educators and students. It provides a comprehensive approach to learning. Positive culture and climate have vast impacts on each child’s school experience (NEFC, 2006). “But classrooms are not entities unto themselves. Rather, they exist as part of a

larger school, and the climate of that larger school can either support all that teachers are working to achieve in their classrooms, or undermine it” (NEFC, 2006, p. v).

Interconnectedness develops when the four factors: level of implementation, professional development, teacher’s perception of administrative support with Responsive Classroom implementation, and self-assessment reflections are working in unison. It is hypothesized that the social-emotional connectedness between educators and children can be positively influenced by Responsive Classroom implementation when it is implemented with fidelity. It is a three year implementation window. For this to occur successfully, the four factors must occur and flow back and forth between all factors.

Through the review of literature, the effects of the RCA have been established concerning educators’ self-efficacy, academic performance, social learning, and effects of Morning Meeting on community building; however, research surrounding the process of implementation and the perceptions of educators who have navigated implementation for the recommended three year process is lacking. It is necessary to understand the implementation process of the RCA, uncovering implementation factors that support and factors that hinder implementation efforts from educators’ perspectives. This valuable information will inform administrators, teachers, and the CRS in an effort to strengthen the implementation process for future educators.

Achieving successful implementation of the RCA in a school district involves a review of many factors such as administrative buy-in and support, school culture, educator motivation, professional development opportunities, capacity of staff to implement, and collegial collaboration time. These factors will be explored through the perspectives of the educators using this approach. When components are implemented

with fidelity, there are increased opportunities for joining academic and social learning, classroom organization, appropriate teacher language, creating structures for effective classroom management, creating risk-free learning environments, and using clear expectations when delivering instruction. The current study reveals the journey and perceptions of educators through the Responsive Classroom implementation process.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methodology, subjects, variables, instruments, data collection, analysis procedures, and interpretation. The current investigation will examine the perceptions of educators regarding RCA.

Research Questions

The primary focus of the research is to reveal elements of successful implementation of the RCA as shared through the lived experiences of educators in a rural school in Western Pennsylvania.

1. How do educators support their personal Responsive Classroom professional development efforts?
2. Has RCA implementation had an impact on job satisfaction?
3. From a practitioner's perspective, what supports are needed to aid implementation efforts?
4. From a practitioner's perspective, what impedes implementation efforts?
5. How does a district's administration impact implementation efforts?

Design of Study / Methodology

Q methodology was utilized to add depth to this phenomenological research study. Q methodology is a research technique that enables a researcher to quantify subjective aspects of research. According to Stenner and Watts (2012), there are a number of steps in Q methodology. In the initial phase, the researcher collects feedback from a larger segment of the population of interest for the purpose of developing a concourse. The statements can be compiled from surveys of participants using selected and open response questions. Once statements are compiled, the statements are reviewed for

variety of responses about the phenomena of study. The goal is to have statements that thoroughly represent each aspect of the research topic being covered. The statements are used to develop the concourse for the q-sort. For this investigation, 40 statements were used (Coogan & Herrington, 2011).

Development of a Concourse

In the initial phase of Q methodology, a concourse is developed. A concourse is a collection of statements that reflect a range of viewpoints and opinions surrounding a topic. These statements can be derived from a variety of sources some of which include survey, verbal discourse, literature, essays, and media. These statements become the basis of raw information to begin the Q methodological process (Brown, 1993).

The current investigation used a 13-item survey for the concourse development. This survey was distributed electronically through Survey Monkey to elementary educators teaching kindergarten through sixth-grade in two rural schools. Survey Monkey is an online program that provides templates for survey creation. This program has components for survey distribution and data collection. Participants ranged from educators who experienced formal RCA level I and II training to participants who had not received training. To gain a wide range of positive, neutral, and negative statements surrounding the approach, the participant selection was broad and included all educators who expressed willingness to participate.

The information gathered in the first four questions of the survey were warm-up questions to ease participants into the open-ended portion of the survey. Responses to the first four questions were not used in the current investigation. The remaining nine questions were open-ended questions relating to participants' experiences with RCA

implementation. Each of the nine questions required participants to provide statement responses. Responses were collected from 42 anonymous participants. These responses revealed a wide range of views and opinions surrounding experiences with The Responsive Classroom Approach. A copy of the survey questions is provided in Appendix A.

The investigator analyzed the 378 open-ended responses collected from the surveys. Forty statements were selected from the 378 survey responses. These statements were used to develop what is known as a Q sample. The 40 selected statements represented a relatively equal number of positive, neutral, and negative perceptions of implementation of the RCA. Fourteen positively worded statements were selected as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. *Concourse Statements*

Positive Statements for Q-sort

- RC online resources and newsletter have supported implementation
 - Administration has supported implementation with professional development opportunities
 - With RC implementation, students become intrinsically motivated to do their best
 - Students take better care of each other because of their ownership and the sense of community
 - Collaboration with colleagues has supported RC implementation
 - Administration has provided collaboration time with other teachers
 - Administration has supported RC implementation efforts in my classroom
 - The team of teachers I work with support my implementation efforts
 - Components of RC have been invaluable in my classroom
 - RC videos have supported my implementation efforts
 - Modeling has made the biggest impact in my classroom
 - RC resource books have supported RC implementation
 - Because of RC implementation, students are more accepting of each other's differences
 - Observing other teachers has supported my implementation
-

As indicated in Table 1, 14 statements represent the positively-worded portion of the concourse. Thirteen statements were selected to represent neutrally-worded ideas as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Concourse Statements*

Neutral Statements for Q-sort

- RC allows students to get to know each other better because of their interaction with each other
- There is nothing administration could do to better support my implementation efforts
- Speaking to children as human beings gets better results rather than being an authoritarian
- I am not sure if there has been a major impact as a result of RC implementation
- Administration needs to monitor consistent RC implementation among staff
- Workshops and group discussions are needed to remind and refresh implementation efforts
- I have learned to build a community of learners who works together, and problem solves
- Once RC is part of your teaching it becomes second nature
- RC is not a “once in a while” thing
- Time invested in the first six weeks of school will pay off in the end
- I feel it is on the teacher to implement not the administrator
- Administration should become trained in RC components
- I would advise educators to continually reflect on their RC implementation efforts and be open to growth

As indicated in Table 2, 13 statements represent the neutrally-worded portion of the concourse. In addition, 13 statements were selected to represent negatively-worded ideas as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. *Concourse Statements*

Negative Statements for Q-sort

- RC causes a loss of additional classroom instruction time
- Administration needs to recognize RC looks different at different grades
- High class size is an obstacle to RC implementation
- I do not believe RC is necessary
- Lack of follow-up training has negatively impacted Responsive Classroom implementation
- Exceptional negative behavior has deterred implementation efforts
- I do not feel we are moving forward with RC implementation
- It is difficult to implement RC with continual changes in curriculum and teaching requirements
- All students do not respond to RC teacher language
- I do not have time in my schedule to adequately implement RC
- It is difficult to implement RC without school-wide implementation
- I do not have enough resources and support to implement RC
- RC is less effective with older elementary students

As indicated in Table 3, 13 statements represent the negatively-worded portion of the concourse.

The statements used were either direct quotes of what was provided by the survey respondents, or a paraphrase of respondents' statements. Statements were rewritten so that they were roughly the same length and style of writing. The concourse statements were placed on notecards so that they could be used with the Q-grid. The concourse was developed prior to the individual interviews with the seven participants in the current investigation.

Q-grid

A 40-statement Q-grid was used during the q-sort portion of the current investigation. The Q-grid provides a framework for the participants to sort the 40 concourse statements. An image of the Q-grid is provided in Figure 1.

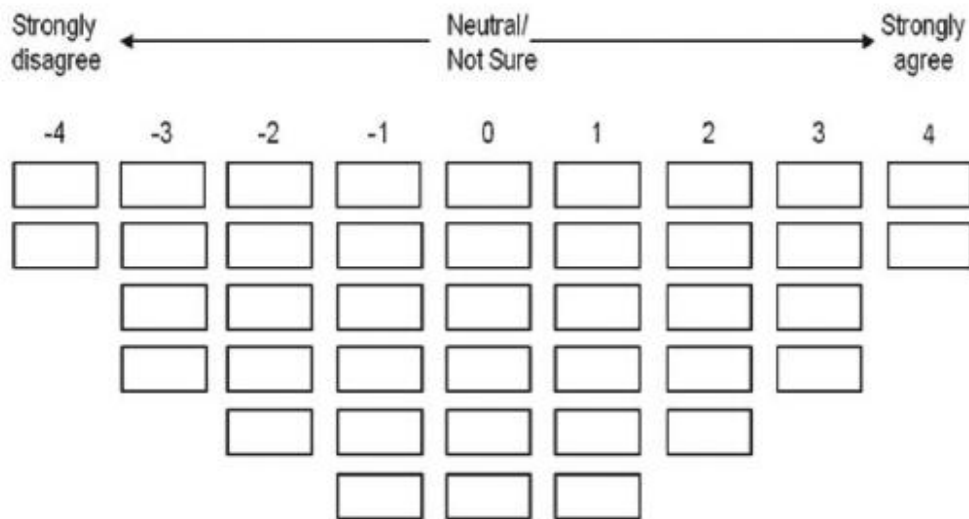


Figure 1. Q-Grid (Hare, McIntosh, Sheldrick, & Westbrook, 2013).

Sample of Participants

All elementary educators in two rural schools, kindergarten through sixth grades, were invited to participate in an online survey to develop the Concourse. From those educators, seven met criteria to continue to the q-sort and phenomenological portion of

the current study. The seven educators teach in a rural school district where PBIS is currently implemented. For the q-sort and phenomenological portion of the research, participants included seven general education teachers who teach in general education inclusive classrooms (i.e., having the same heterogeneous group of children who do not switch classes for academic subjects and remain with the same group of children throughout the school day). The seven selected participants teach either kindergarten or first grade in the same rural district located in western Pennsylvania. The seven research participants had exceeded the three-year implementation phase as recommended by the Center for Responsive Schools (personal communication, Sara Filliant, March 15, 2018) and received Responsive Classroom Level I and Level II training. All participated in an additional refresher course. These educators have not received extensive training in the past two years but continue to implement the RCA.

Procedure: The Warm-Up Activity

The seven selected participants responded to a short inventory about the RCA. This inventory included 20 items; items were drawn from The Responsive Classroom Assessment. The Responsive Classroom Assessment consists of 125 items with qualifying statements based in a rubric form. Educators evaluated their teaching practices by marking qualifying statements on the rubric (NEFC, 2009). This tool provides measures through educators' self-assessments. A copy of this inventory is provided in Appendix B. This additional step was used as a warm-up activity to give the participants an opportunity to reflect on their experiences prior to the sorting activity. The responses from the warm-up activity were not used for data collection purposes.

This activity was edited down to 20 items from the initial 125 items in the assessment. Each item was carefully selected to cover the basic implementation of the RCA in an effort to help participants feel comfortable with the practices they have implemented and warm-up to the q-sort activity and semi-structured interviews to follow.

Procedure: The Q-Sort Activity

For the formal q-sort activity, each participant was given the 40 concourse statements which were written on notecards. Each of the 40 cards included one statement developed from the concourse. Participants were asked to sort the 40 cards into three units. One pile represented positive statements, one represented negative statements, and the final represented neutral statements as determined by the meaning a participant derived from each individual statement. There was not an expectation that each pile would be equal in number during the participant sorting process (Stenner & Watts, 2012).

After statements were sorted, participants were asked to begin placing statement cards on the Q-grid (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). Participants were instructed to place negative statements on the left side of the grid, positive statements on the right side of the grid, and neutral statements in the center of the grid. This is a subjective activity with no right or wrong responses (Coogan & Herrington, 2011). During this process, the investigator and a trained interviewer asked the participants about their statement placement, movement, and adjustments.

The goal of the interview was to encourage participants to provide some reasons and/or stories for where they had placed statements and why they might have moved or adjusted their placement of the statements. This activity and oral discourse between participant and researcher provided a window into the participant's world, thus

uncovering their personal lived-experiences and meanings applied to those experiences, related to the phenomena being investigated. The sorting interview was digitally recorded for accuracy purposes.

After completing the q-sort, a photograph was taken of the statement placement. Each statement was numbered, and these numbers were inputted into software that was used to analyze the pattern of each participant's responses. The analysis included an inverse factor analysis. PQ Method is a software developed specifically for the analysis of q-sort responses. The analysis completed by PQ Method sorted the participants into meaningful groups, based on their pattern of sorting. This analysis was synthesized with the interview data that are provided during the q-sort process.

Procedure: The Semi-Structured Interview

Upon completion of the q-sort activity, participants participated in a semi-structured interview. Each participant was asked 12 open-ended questions to uncover their experiences and perceptions related to the implementation of the RCA. These questions were specifically structured to add additional details which may or may not have been uncovered during the q-sort activity. A copy of the semi-structured interview guide is provided in Appendix C.

Summary

Chapter 3 detailed the use of Q methodology revealing a window into participants' views and opinions surrounding the RCA. A wealth of data was collected and analyzed following the q-sort phase of the research. Common themes emerged as a result of coding, analysis, and evaluation of the data. Chapter 4 will reveal the results of research.

Chapter 4

Results

The focus of the current investigation is the Responsive Classroom Approach (RCA). Research participants engaged in individual interviews and q-sorts intended to expose their perceptions and experiences related to Responsive Classroom implementation. The research questions for this investigation include the following:

1. How do educators support their personal Responsive Classroom professional development efforts?
2. Has RCA implementation had an impact on job satisfaction?
3. From a practitioner's perspective, what supports are needed to aid implementation efforts?
4. From a practitioner's perspective, what impedes implementation efforts?
5. How does a district's administration impact implementation efforts?

Overview of Procedures

Support was solicited and received from an elementary school in Western Pennsylvania. After the Youngstown State University (YSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol was approved, invitations were sent out to educators who had at least three years' experience implementing the RCA. With cooperation from the building administration, six of the seven interviews were conducted on one day; an additional interview was conducted two days later. Educators participated in the interviews while a district substitute teacher covered their class time. The q-sort and interviews were conducted by the two researchers.

The seven selected participants responded to a short self-assessment about the RCA. This Warm-Up Assessment included 20 items; items were drawn from The Responsive Classroom Assessment. This tool provides measures through results of educators' self-assessments. A copy of The Warm-Up Assessment is provided in Appendix B. Following the Warm-Up Assessment, a q-sort was utilized to add depth to this phenomenological research study. Q methodology is a research technique that enables a researcher to quantify subjective aspects of participants' perspective. A 40-statement Q-grid was used during the q-sort portion of the current investigation. The Q-grid provides a framework for the participants to sort the 40 concourse statements.

During the q-sort activity, participants were asked questions about their placement of the statements on the Q-grid. Upon completion of the q-sort activity, participants participated in a semi-structured interview. Each participant was asked 12 open-ended questions to uncover their experiences and perceptions related to the implementation of The Responsive Classroom Approach. These questions were specifically structured to add additional details which may or may not have been uncovered during the q-sort activity. A copy of the semi-structured interview guide is provided in Appendix C.

Description of the Participants

Seven participants took part in the Warm-Up Assessment, q-sort, and semi-structured interviews. Participants had taught an average of 23 years each with the teaching range between 15 and 30 years. The RCA which is comprised of the 10 teaching practices has been implemented in participants' classrooms for an average of 17.74 years, with a range between 15 and 19 years. Two of the participants were male. The remaining five were female. For the q-sort portion of this research, an additional female educator's responses

were included. To maintain the anonymity of participants, each educator was referred to by the pronouns she and her throughout this chapter.

Of the seven participants:

- one taught kindergarten and first grade,
- two had experience in Head Start through first grade,
- one had experience in kindergarten through second grade,
- one taught kindergarten through third grade,
- one taught kindergarten, first, and third grades, and
- one taught kindergarten, first, and fifth grades

Each educator in the current study spent the majority of her experience in kindergarten and first grades.

One of the participants was a consulting teacher for the Center for Responsive Schools formerly known as Northeast Foundation for Children. This participant received extensive training including personalized coaching by Marlynn Clayton, founder of the Responsive Classroom Approach, coaching by Carol Davis, author and consulting teacher for Northeast Foundation for Children, along with specialized presenters' workshops and retreats provided by Northeast Foundation for Children. The consulting teacher presented workshops across the nation, under contract, by the Center for Responsive Schools.

The remaining six participants experienced formal training in the approach. Four participants were trained 18 years ago through a whole-school training provided by Northeast Foundation for Children, currently known as Center for Responsive Schools. The remaining two participants were trained by the in-house consulting teachers. All

participants participated in Responsive Classroom Level I training and Responsive Classroom Level II training opportunities. Additional refresher courses were provided by the in-house consulting teacher. The refresher courses were provided most recently in June 2015.

Concourse statements with corresponding numbers are provided in appendix D. The resulting q-sorts' and the Warm-Up Assessment scores for each participant are provide in Figures 2 through 9.

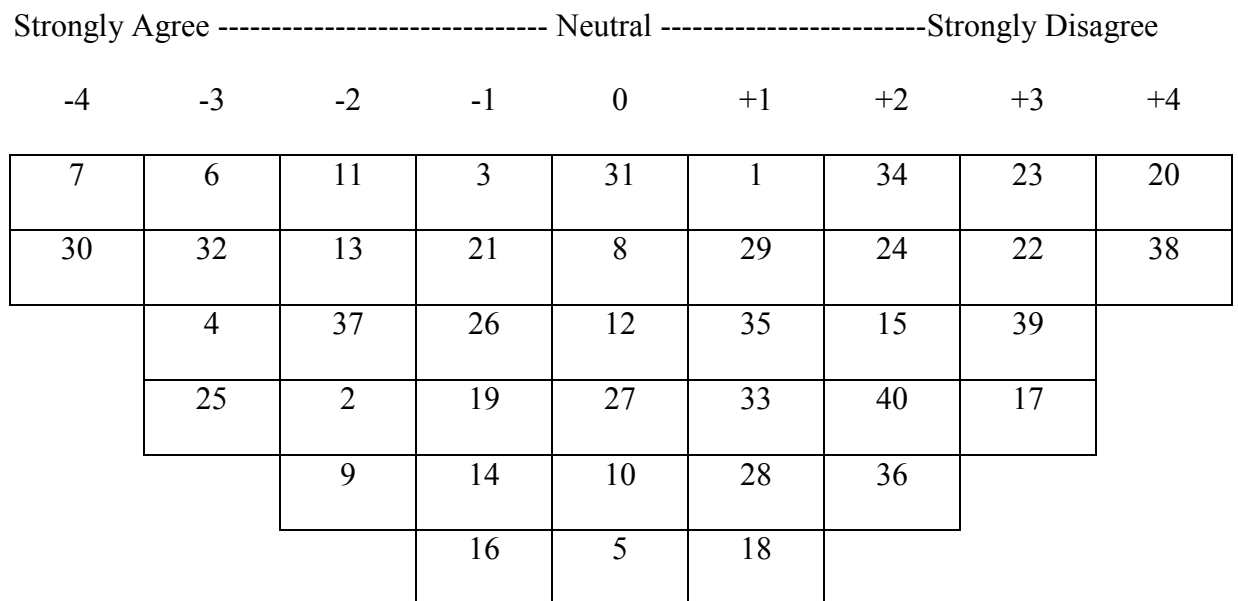


Figure 2. Participant 1 Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 47

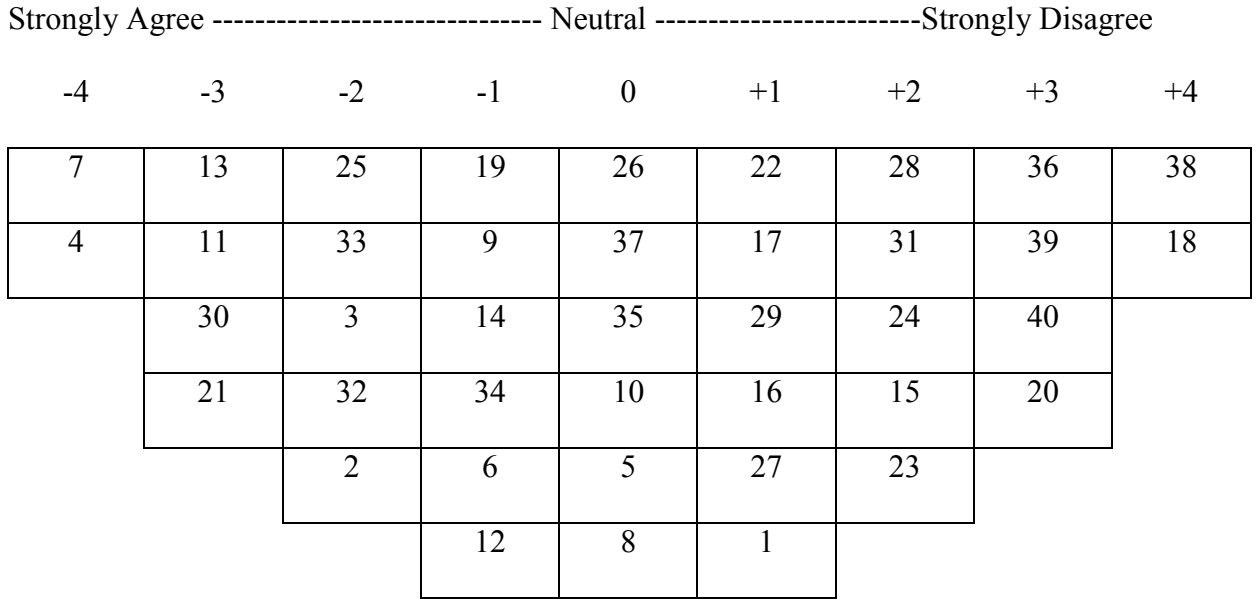


Figure 3. Participant 2 Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 52

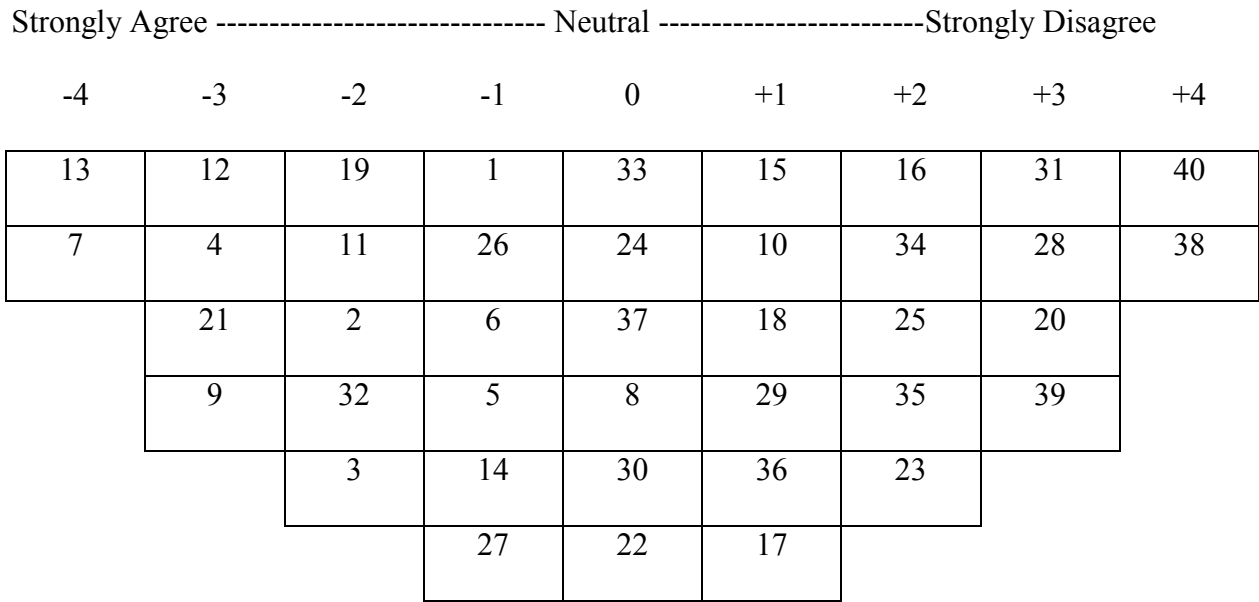


Figure 4. Participant 3 Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 49

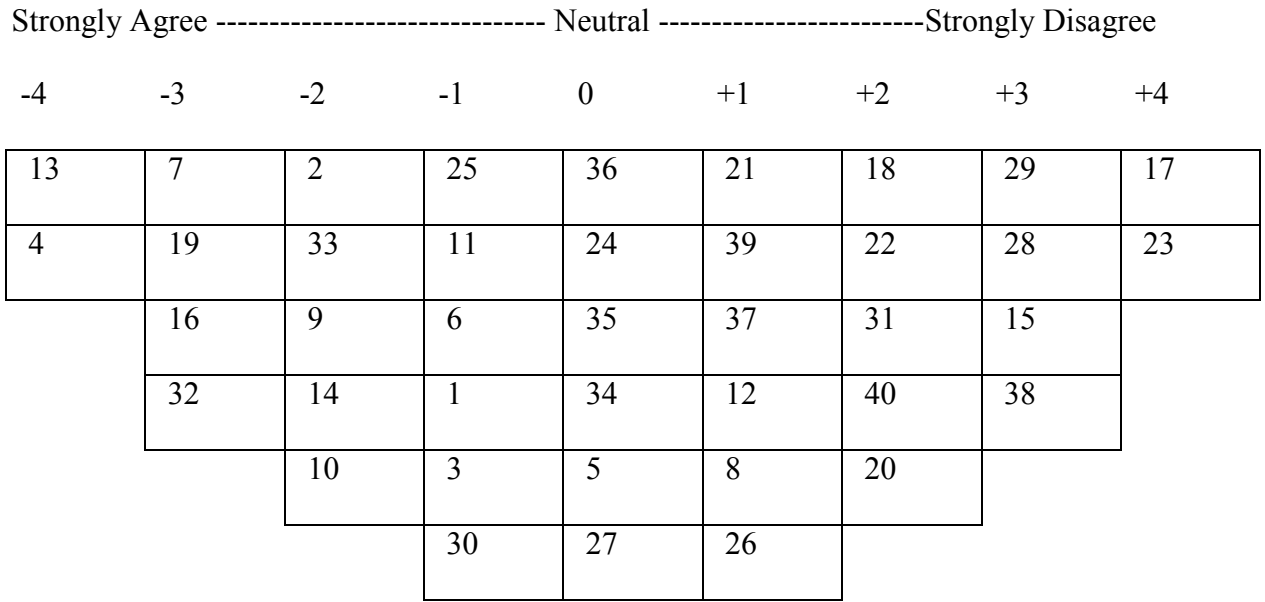


Figure 5. Participant 4 Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 44

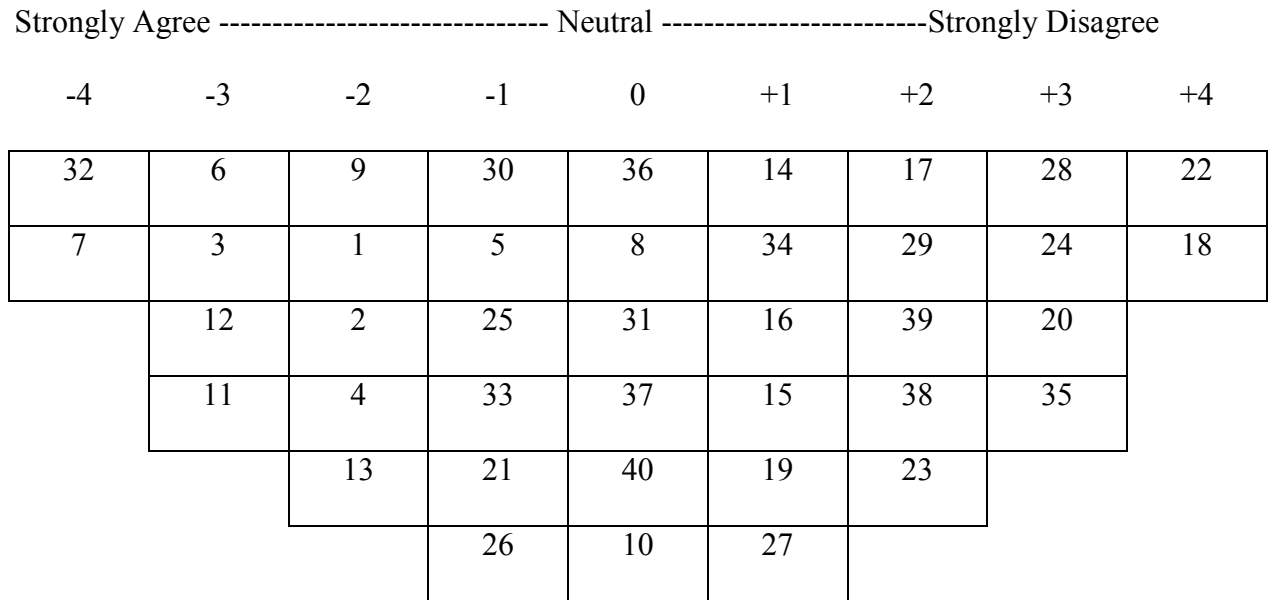


Figure 6. Participant 5 Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 51

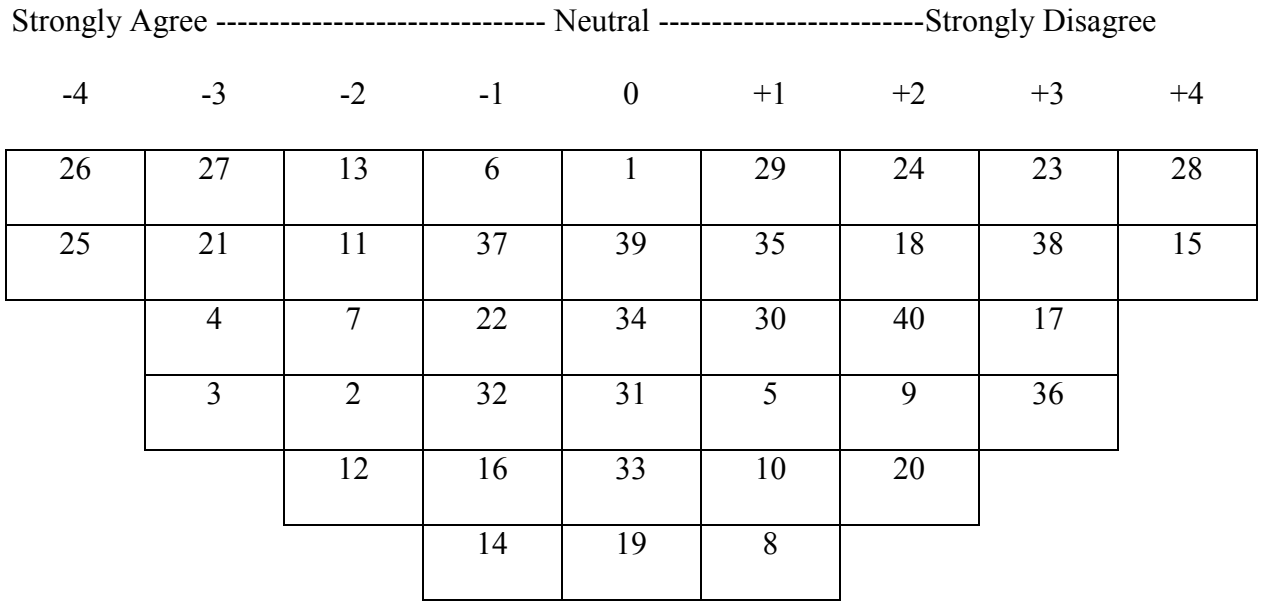


Figure 7. Participant 6- Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 45

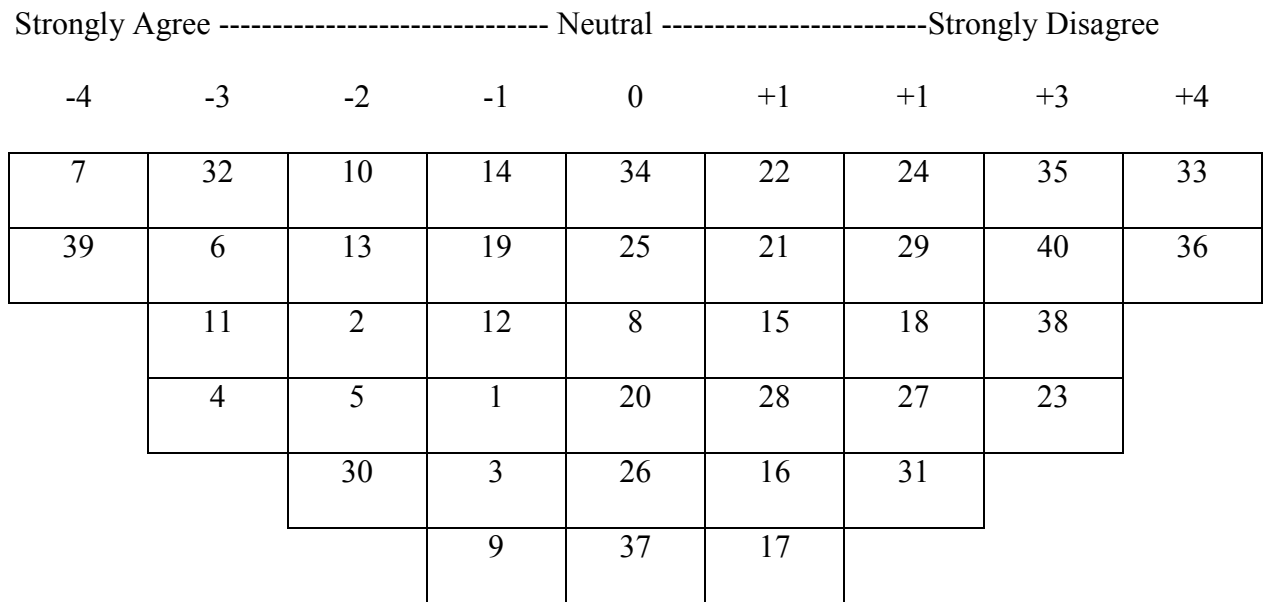


Figure 8. Participant 7 Q-sort with No Warm-Up Score

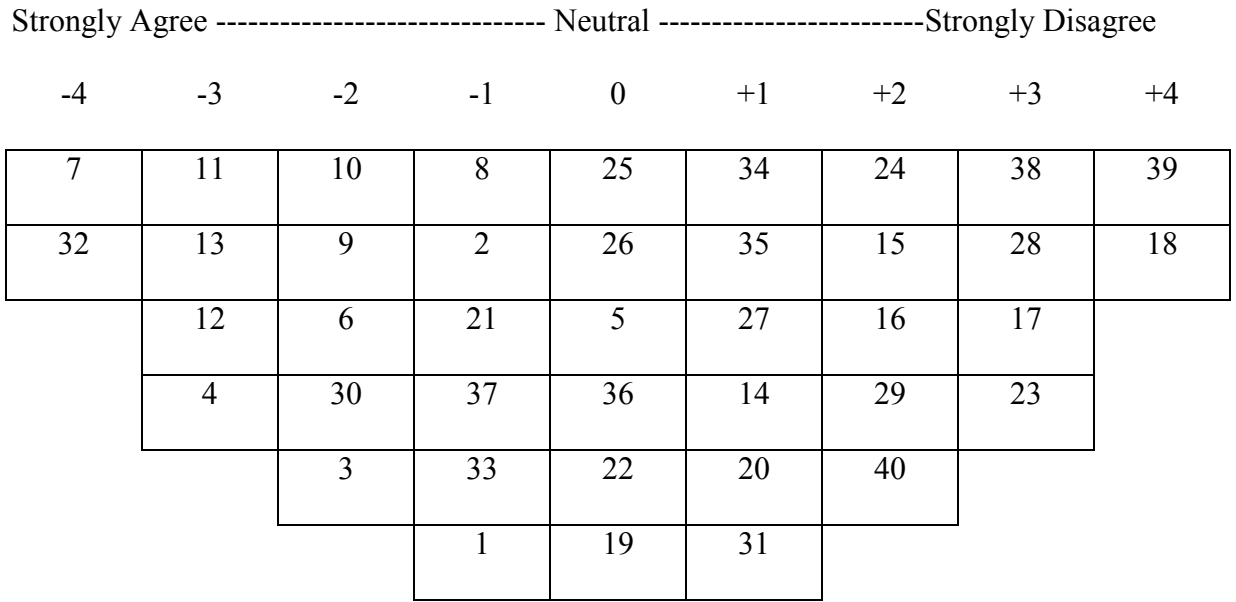


Figure 9. Participant 8 Q-sort with Warm-Up Score of 51

As indicated above, the participants' Warm-up Assessment scores range from 44-52.

This Warm-Up Assessment activity provided participants with a three-point rubric to indicate their level of implementation of the RCA components. The possible score range for this activity was between 18 and 54. The mean of participant scores was 48.43 for the seven participants. The results of the Warm-Up Assessment are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Warm-Up Assessment

Mean	Range	Standard Deviation
48.42	8	3.15

As indicated in Table 4, there is a mean score of 48.42 for the Warm-Up Assessment.

Self-Assessment scores at or above 45 indicate that participants are successfully implementing RCA teaching practices.

Q-Sort Analysis

In order to conduct the q-sort, all statements were uploaded into PQMethod. Once statements were formatted correctly, the next step was to enter the data for each participant's q-sort. A centroid factor analysis was attempted, however, could not be conducted because of a lack of association amongst the data with a resulting $r = .001$. This likely occurred because a centroid factor analysis method will attempt to force at least seven factors out of the data set (Schmolck, 2018). Therefore, a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used to assess the variance explained by the potential factors. PCA is a more forgiving analysis in that it extracts the best information from the available data without losing any variability in the data to error (Stenner & Watts, 2012). The results of the PCA are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Results of Principle Components Analysis*

Eigenvalues	%	Cum
1 5.62	70.34	70.34
2 0.57	7.12	77.45
3 0.50	6.21	83.67
4 0.42	5.26	88.93
5 0.35	4.32	93.25
6 0.26	3.23	96.48
7 0.18	2.23	98.70
8 0.10	1.30	100.00

As indicated in Table 5, only one factor was found to have an Eigenvalue greater than one, indicating that this one factor captures 70.34 % of participants' perceptions regarding the q-sort statements. The guideline of including Eigenvalues greater than one is used to ensure that the factor explains significantly more variance in the data than zero variance. This is consistent with the findings of the factor rotation matrix presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Factor Rotation Matrix*

Participant	1	2
P1	0.88	0.03
P2	0.81	0.11
P3	0.85	0.02
P4	0.81	-0.01
P5	0.86	-0.11
P6	0.74	0.53
P7	0.73	-0.50
P8	0.91	-0.08

As indicated above, all participants load onto factor 1 at 0.73 to 0.91. Only participant six and participant seven are dysfunctionally loaded on factor two as well. Additional rotation of the participant responses was attempted resulting in the factor rotation matrix presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Second Factor Rotation Matrix*

Participant	1	2
P1	0.88	0.03
P2	0.91	0.11
P3	0.85	0.02
P4	0.81	-0.01
P5	0.86	-0.11
P6	0.74	0.53
P7	0.73	-0.50
P8	0.91	-0.08

As indicated in Table 7, the additional rotation resulted in little change in the factor matrix. Figure 10 presents a graphical representation of the factor rotation matrix.

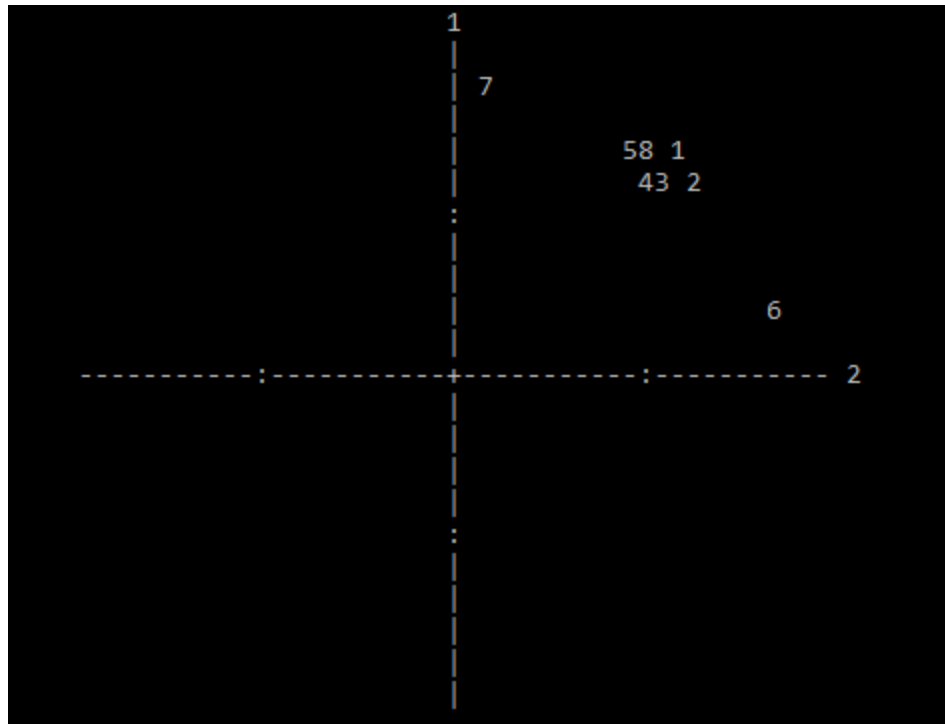


Figure 10. Rotated Matrix of Participants

As indicated in Figure 10, the rotated matrix reveals how close the responses of the eight participants were to the responses of other participants. This strong clustering of the participants' responses is consistent with the resulting one factor outcome. Due to the outcome of the data represented by a single factor that accounted for more than 70% of the variance in participants' perceptions based on their q-sorts, an additional review of responses was conducted in order to understand where the most frequent level of consensus occurred. The q-sort grid presented in Figure 11 represents the statements revealing the highest level of consensus.

Strongly Agree ----- Neutral ----- Strongly Disagree

-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4

7(6)	4(5)	2(7)	1(4)	37(4)	15(3)	24(5)	23(4)	18(3)
4(2)	11(4)	9(4)	6(4)	5(3)	16(3)	40(4)	28(4)	38(3)
13(2)	6(3)	13(4)	14(4)	8(3)	17(3)	15(3)	38(4)	
32(2)	12(3)	3(3)	3(3)	10(3)	27(3)	18(3)	17(3)	
	21(3)	10(3)	19(3)	26(3)	29(3)	23(3)	20(3)	
	32(3)	11(3)	21(3)	31(3)	35(3)	29(3)	39(3)	
			26(3)	34(3)		31(3)		
				36(3)				

Figure 11. Highest Level of Consensus

As indicated in Figure 11, statements revealing the highest level of consensus on the grid focused on participants' passion for and commitment to the Responsive Classroom Approach. Specific statements are provided in Table 8.

Table 8. *Statements with Highest Consensus*

Rank	F	Statement
-4	6	I do not believe RC is necessary *
-3	5	RC causes a loss of additional classroom instruction time *
		It is difficult to implement RC with continual changes in curriculum
-3	4	and teaching requirements*
-2	7	I do not have enough resources and support to implement RC*
-2	4	Exceptional negative behavior has deterred implementation efforts*
-2	4	I do not have time in my schedule to adequately implement RC*
-1	4	It is difficult to implement RC without school-wide implementation*
-1	4	High class size is an obstacle to RC implementation*
-1	4	RC online resources and newsletter have supported implementation
0	4	I feel it is on the teacher to implement not the administrator
2	5	Collaboration with colleagues has supported RC implementation
2	4	Once RC is part of your teaching it becomes second nature
		Students take better care of each other because of their ownership and
3	4	the sense of community
		I have learned to build a community of learners who works together,
3	4	and problem solves
3	4	Time invested in the first six weeks of school will pay off in the end
4	3	Components of RC have been invaluable in my classroom
4	3	Time invested in the first six weeks of school will pay off in the end

Note: * indicate negatively worded statements

As indicated above, statements reveal passion for RC implementation and consensus among participant responses. Negatively worded statements were ranked at the strongly disagree portion of the q-grid and positively worded statements fell in the strongly agree portion of the q-grid. Appendix E provides the statements that had no consensus or only one matching endorsement.

Qualitative Feedback

The Warm-Up Assessment, q-sort discussions, and interviews with each participant lasted approximately 50 minutes per person. Q-sorts correlated with narratives told by participants. The stories of each educator were rich with detail and brought to life the lived-experiences that shaped each educator into passionate, dedicated professionals. Each participant had strong convictions, philosophies grounded in social emotional learning and Care Theory, and an understanding of the developmental needs of students. The intention of this section was to paint a vivid picture of the nuances that illuminate and shape each story and share information gleaned to answer original research questions. Each question was answered by intertwining participants' narratives with q-sort results.

Research Question #1

Research question one asked:

How do educators support their personal Responsive Classroom professional development efforts?

Collaboration with colleagues according to the q-sort and narratives shared by participants appears to be the most valuable support for successful implementation of RC. Five of the seven participants scored collaboration as +2. The remaining two participants

scored it as neutral; however, their interviews told a different story. Each interview detailed strong endorsement for collaboration. According to participants, collaboration was viewed as instrumental when implementing the RCA. Participants appreciated the collaboration, guidance, and support offered by the in-house Center for Responsive Schools' Consulting Teacher.

When asked how she supported her own professional growth related to RC implementation, one participant shared, "basically talking to my colleagues and you know something comes up, I'll ask them or someone will share a new greeting or new activity that they're doing. ... it's just constant collaboration with my peers and talking about, this isn't working what can I do? Um ... just those types of things."

Participants recommend RC books that they found particularly helpful to each other. When sharing about professional literature, the majority of participants said they frequently use *Yardsticks*, by Chip Wood, *Interactive Modeling*, by Margaret Wilson, *The First Six Weeks of School*, by Paula Denton and Roxanne Kriete, *Teaching Children to Care*, by Ruth Charney, *The Power of Words*, by Paula Denton, and Responsive Classroom Level I and II resource books by NEFC. "As far as Responsive Classroom, the *First Six Weeks* book I still refer to. I have some Morning Meeting and activity books that I've used." [Colleagues are] "always sharing stuff."

One experienced educator said, "I still read the books and I don't use the assessment book a ton, but at least a couple times a year especially if there's an area that isn't going well. I should have done that with arrival." Arrival Time is one of the components addressed in *The Responsive Classroom Assessment*, by NEFC. The Warm-Up activity was adapted from this resource book. She continued,

My kids come in my room like squirrel[s] ... they're just so excited to be there. If I had done that more frequently, [referring to the self-assessment in The Responsive Classroom Assessment], I would have been able to say wait a second, that's not what it should look like when they come in the room, and I need to stop and model it for them, but I generally let them do it and clap my hands and they bring it down.

The same participant shared, "I love, love, love the videos! There's a new one out on language that's awesome. I try to revisit two books in January: *The Power of Words*, looking through all the things that I highlighted and the *Interactive Modeling*." She added:

I think for all of us we spend so much time modeling in September, but sometimes it's extending what you have to model. Also, sometimes it's going back and remodeling because you haven't done it in a while. Those two books are the most valuable in August and September. I like the other books, but they are too simple for me. Those ones make me think [referring to *The Power of Words* and *Interactive Modeling*].

One comment exemplified individual problem-solving, the use of resource books, and sharing with colleagues. The participant shared,

Modeling has made the biggest impact in my classroom, especially at the first six weeks of kindergarten. It's huge. And after Christmas, even now, we've talked about as the curriculum gets harder, it really starts to separate these are the readers and these ones aren't ready yet for that. Yet, you see a shift in their behavior. I was looking in *Yardsticks* and it said, 'unsettled behavior is evidence of growth

and change.’ So, I quickly typed it and sent it to my k-1 colleagues as the thought for the day.

Online resources and newsletters appeared to be one of the least affective tools identified by five participants when referring to professional growth, scoring a -1 on the q-sort. Conversely, two participants rated online resources and newsletters as a +1. One participant revealed that she was a hands-on learner and rarely used any printed resources for professional development. Collaboration was the educators’ preferred mode of professional development.

Research Question #2

Research question two asked:

Has RCA implementation had an impact on job satisfaction?

A common thread woven through each interview was the impact RCA had on personal job satisfaction. Educators shared stories of enthusiasm for the approach and the transformation they experienced as a result of exposure to the approach. When asked if the RCA had an impact on job satisfaction one participant responded,

Absolutely, I use to be very authoritative. Now, I don’t ... it’s a much more comfortable community type atmosphere than it used to be. Which when the kids feel the community, that comfortable and that safe, the teacher cannot help feeling that as well.

Another participant shared affirmations for the RCA:

I think it is something that has benefited me as an educator. I think it has benefited the students that have been in my classroom. I just feel like it was a component that was missing in the first couple of years that I started teaching that

now I think is invaluable. I think like I said, I wouldn't start my day without a Morning Meeting. I want those kids to have choices throughout the day. The way I talk and speak to kids is so much better then when I first started. I just think it sets a positive tone for the year and the learning environment for the kids. I just I really enjoy it. I do.

The q-sort statements, centered on job satisfaction, garnered the strongest responses. Statements that reflected negatively on the RCA were most strongly disagreed with during the q-sort process. Statements that reflected positively on the RCA received the strongest ratings by all participants. The negatively worded statement, RC causes a loss of additional classroom instructional time, was ranked a -4 and -3 respectively by all participants. Three participants gave the statement "Time invested in the first six weeks of school will pay off in the end" a rating of +4, and the remaining four participants rated the statement as a +3.

The Center for Responsive Schools recommends spending the first six weeks of school with a strong emphasis on getting to know students developmentally, building community, developing rules, modeling expectations, introducing supplies, and intentionally teaching each component of the approach, while simultaneously building a bond with students' families. Illuminating this point a participant explained,

"I think spending those first six weeks, especially in kindergarten, developing the classroom rules together, developing a sense of community, making kids feel safe in the classroom...I think that even though people might see you loosing time at the beginning because you're doing that; I think the benefits of that are going to actually save you time later in the year because you're not dealing with as many

behavior problems. You're not dealing with um things like that, and the kids know you're [*sic*] expectations. They know what's expected in the classroom. Ah and they become a part of it. You know they help develop the rules. They help develop that sense of community. They know how they want to be treated, how they want others to treat them, and I think you just deal with fewer problems and issues throughout the year that actually save you time as you go along. So especially with the little ones coming in, 'cause sometimes it's their first experience in a school setting, you know sharing taking turns all that kind of stuff.'

This explanation of the benefits of implementing the first six weeks of school highlights the added instructional time gained with implementation of RCA. This correlates with the responses participants gave to the statement: "I do not have time in my schedule to adequately implement RC." Participants ranked this statement in columns -4, -3, and -2. Participants shared added instructional time is gained with implementation.

The statement: "I have learned to build a community of learners who work together and problem solve", also garnered strong support, ranging from +1 to +4 with the majority of respondents rating the statement a +3. Adding anecdotal support to this q-sort finding, a participant responded,

Like I said, when you're not constantly dealing with behavior issues when children are taking responsibility for solving their problems, I think it just makes a more pleasant environment for everybody including myself. Um ... I think it's less stressful in the classroom. So I would say yeah, I would.

This participant was referring to the question, “Has RCA had an impact on job satisfaction?”

Many negatively worded statements were ranked in columns -4 and -3. The statement: “I do not believe RC is necessary” was ranked -4 by six participants and a -2 and -3 by the remaining participants. The educator who ranked this statement as a -2, used column -3 and -4 for a number of statements to reflect her perception of administration’s lack of support for Responsive Classroom implementation stating, “I still think we need more administrative support, if you implement it correctly.” This participant was referring to school-wide implementation. School-wide implementation is ideal for children and encompasses all aspects of the school day from getting on the bus, experiences in the classroom; specials including: art, music, computer, library, and physical education; lunch; recess; and dismissal. When this approach is incorporated into the entire school day children experience consistency and know expectations throughout each day with all educators and staff they encounter.

All participants responded positively in the q-sort to the statement: “Components of RC have been invaluable in my classroom.” One shared, “I’m going to tell you, I would not be a teacher if I didn’t have it.”

Research Question #3

Research question three asked:

From a practitioner’s perspective, what supports are needed to aid implementation efforts?

Participants’ responses were unified on the idea that collegial collaboration is one of the most impactful ways to aid implementation. One educator elaborated, “Collaboration

with colleagues is key. We were all trained together. We were all going through the same things. It helped to keep us accountable.” Adding to the value placed on collaboration another educator shared, “I think, with my team I have enough resources specifically for myself.” Additional responses varied between participants. Additional supports revealed during interviews included: Coaching, RC workshops, strong administrative support, observing colleagues, RC resource libraries, RC newsletters, and online resources added to participants’ growth.

Six of the eight educators who participated in the q-sort responded favorably to the statement: “I would advise educators to continually reflect on their RC implementation efforts and be open to growth” with scores of +1, +2, and +3. Two respondents scored this statement in the neutral range.

According to participants, books published by the Northeast Foundation for Children and The Center for Responsive Schools have contributed to the extensive resource library supporting implementation of the RCA. There is a book with in-depth explanations for each component. An educator offered, “Responsive Classroom has the best books and resources.” Another shared,

RC materials the new ones are always coming. The modeling the teacher language one was fabulous. They are all put out by Responsive Classroom. We also go back to the *First Six Weeks of School* and *Yardsticks*, which were resources we used when we started, but we constantly refer to them. In the beginning of the year I always get out the *First Six Weeks of School* again. I even use the manuals that they gave us during my training. There are also great

ones on new greetings and activities that I just got. Cause you have to constantly change it and update it.

The same educator shared that the most valuable books in her opinion are *The Power of Words*, *First Six Weeks of School*, and *Interactive Modeling*.

Responses to the statement: “Observing other teachers has supported my implementation” were varied across the q-sort grid with scores between -3 and +2. One educator shared, “I wish we could observe each other more. I swear my two years as a part time teacher was the most invaluable time being able to go into everyone’s classrooms was amazing.” All educators involved in the current study received Responsive Level I and Level II training. All participated in an additional refresher course. These educators shared that they have not received extensive training in a number of years but continue to experience successful implementation.

Formal training by the district’s in-house trainer was last offered in 2015. This training was not mandated but was available to all elementary educators. Because this training was voluntary to participants, few of the new educators chose to participate. Most of the educators who attended had previously received RC training. Participants shared that the RCA is not currently a school wide initiative. Some educators across the district pick and choose aspects of RCA to use in their classrooms but are not employing full implementation. Participants in the current study attribute their successful, sustained implementation to the collegial collaboration of their kindergarten- first-grade team and the support of the in-house trainer who teaches first grade. One shared,

I can’t imagine what my classroom would be like, if I did not have RC. It would look very, very different. We all can joke here that we’ve been to hundreds of

trainings and this is the one that 18 years ago we went through and we are still consistently using today.

Responses to the statement: “Workshops and group discussions are needed to remind and refresh implementation efforts” varied across the q-sort activity ranging from -1 through +2. One educator attributed successful implementation to having an in-house Consulting Teacher stating,

You have to get somebody excited about it and get everybody else excited about it as well. So if you don’t have somebody like that, it would be real easy for Responsive Classroom to become about Morning Meeting instead of about interactive modeling, and setting up the rules in your classroom, teacher language ... I think it could just be a very narrow focus.

Additionally, she shared about her interaction with Responsive Classroom trainers who modeled RC components in her district, “I was in awe of what they were doing with their kids and the way they were talking to their kids.” This educator had the most extensive training and also added,

I don’t know if I had just gone through the training, if I would be where I am now. I feel like the fact that people came in and observed me and coached me and made me think very deeply about why I was doing, what I was doing really ... helped me to get where I am and I do that for everybody else.

Research Question #4

Research question four asked:

From a practitioner’s perspective, what impedes implementation efforts?

A theme that played out across each interview was the disdain for extrinsic rewards, which, in the district, are used to manipulate the behavior of students. Although most educators could reconcile the philosophy of Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS), which promotes extrinsic rewards and was adopted by the district, they were extremely opposed to the reward system and how it was used in the school. One educator elaborated,

We've recently started to move towards school wide behavior support, which in some ways it's very similar to Responsive Classroom. It's modeling, it's building community, it's reinforcing with your language, but in other ways it's totally different like giving a Trojan ticket for appropriate behavior, which is rewarding kids for doing the right thing instead of doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. So that's the very very tricky part...I've told people who are very against school wide, as people who are very passionate about Responsive Classroom, we can still make that work because at least kids are having modeling. At least kids are practicing appropriate behaviors. You don't have to reward kids for those behaviors.

One educator shared her frustration when explaining to parents why she does not participate in the school-wide external reward system:

At the beginning of kindergarten that's what we get the most questions about. It doesn't fit with my philosophy, but I skirt that. I say, I don't reward behavior because I expect children to follow the rules because it's the right thing to do.

When asked, "has anything impeded RC implementation?" another shared, "If I followed the Trojan tickets and all that, then yes. I kind of just do my own thing."

Q-sort responses revealed that most participants did not believe exceptional negative behaviors deterred implementation, high class size is not an obstacle to RC implementation, and it is not difficult to implement RC without school-wide implementation. Although participants struggled with school-wide implementation of PBIS they also recognized that there are challenges for other grade levels with school-wide RCA implementation. One revealed,

Second and third have been trained, and they pick and choose specific pieces to use and like it's not built into our day to do Morning Meeting or class meetings. We don't have a schedule of our day. Third grade is departmentalized. It's really hard for them to make any kind of adjustments. I know one of the teachers does it during her language arts block. They were asking about it at East [East houses grades 4 through 6] because they want it to be part of their day. The first 20 minutes, there's no specials. They're craving it over there.

Reinforcing this statement another respondent shared, "I'm very fortunate, the group I work with they're all very accepting of RC. They use it well. If I have any questions, there's someone I can turn to ask so, but I don't think that's true for every grade level."

When referring to high class sizes, one participant stated, "High class size has nothing to do with it. We've had 27 seven kids in a class and you can still do it. You just have to manage it."

Although curricular changes and federal mandates were touched upon during interviews, it was not an overarching focus of participants' stories. Participants disagreed with the statement: "It is difficult to implement RC with continual changes in curriculum and teaching requirements. "Four participants responded with a -3 and the remaining four

responded with scores of -2 or -1. One educator shared that the need to fully implement Morning Meeting and address the social and emotional learning of students surpassed the need to force academic acquisition stating,

The one year probably when Common Core came out they were pushing so much academics that I really shortened Morning Meeting, and half way through the year I said no and went back because that's the way to start your day off, know where your kids' moods are at, and keep them in that routine.

The educator believed she put pressure on herself to alter instruction and veer away from the RCA.

Research Question #5

Research question five asked:

How does a district's administration impact implementation efforts?

According to participant feedback, administrative turn-over has had a detrimental effect on implementation efforts. This district has had six different elementary principals and three superintendents in the past 16 years. This lack of consistency has played a part in the lack of school-wide fidelity of implementation according to participants. One stated, "Although all administrators have been positive some have been more supportive and some less." A participant shared about the principal who was responsible for bringing the RCA to the district,

When we were trained we had the best administrator ever, and she supported us and nudged us...and knew it was a growing process, whereas now, our administrator really doesn't understand RC. I think in his classroom he probably did a lot of things that were like Responsive Classroom, based on the things he

talks about and the things we're having in-service about, but we haven't had RC support for years and we are still able to do it. We still as a K-1 team are still able to do it because of the support of our K-1 team.

She went on to share, that the principal "was fabulous cause she knew what she wanted to see in your room and she could ask you questions to make you think about it. I really feel like administration has to be trained. It's really important because if they aren't, then they don't understand why you're taking the extra time to do social and emotional things."

Another participant who received extensive training was asked if the training adequately prepared her for implementation. Her response was about the same principal,

"Yes, because at the time when we were first trained, our principal... brought in trainers from Responsive Classroom to follow up with us. I would observe them doing a guided discovery or doing modeling. If I was comfortable, they would come and watch me, critique me, guide me. [The principal] did a very nice job of not doing it one time and expecting you to get it. It was constant preparation and practice.

She then followed with experiences from her second principal of the six, "Then my next administrator was very supportive ... she also worked with us as far as lunch, recess, trying to bring it into other areas of the school." According to participants the administrator who brought the RCA to the school and her successor were the most instrumental in implementation efforts. Proceeding principals did not offer the same level of support as shared by participants throughout interviews. Another participant stated as she moved the statement: "Administration has supported implementation with

professional development opportunities” from the agreed side of the q-grid to the disagree -1,

I feel that right now in our building I don't think it's stressed enough...the importance of Responsive classroom seeing all the benefits from it, and I think that might have something to do with it not being stressed as much from the administration down. Not that anyone's saying that we shouldn't do it or anything like that, but if it were made more accessible and valued by more people I think it would be more beneficial for our building. I think that comes from the higher ups saying that this is what we need to do. We see the benefits of it. That's why I moved that one. (This comment was made to offer an explanation as the participant moved a statement during the q-sort process).

The same participant added,

I don't feel it's been touched upon a lot like it has been in the past. I feel that those of us who have really been trained who have really been taught the importance of it, and then I think there is a new group has come in that really hasn't had the experience we have had with Responsive Classroom and seeing the results of it. I don't think anyone is not wanting to do it. I don't think it's been available to them.

Additional responses to the statement: “Administration has supported implementation with professional development opportunities” included three participants' ratings of -3, three ratings of a -1, and the two remaining participants' ratings +1.

When responding to the statement: Administration has provided collaboration time with other teachers, respondents' answers widely varied. Some commented on the

consistency with grade level preparation time, common grade level lunch times, and before school multi-grade level by monthly meetings. Others did not feel there were enough opportunities to collaborate about Responsive Classroom. One shared,

I don't feel we've been provided with opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. To those of us who have been through the training and things like that. I don't want to make it seem like our administration isn't open to it, I just don't think we have been provided those opportunities right now.

The statement: "Administration should be trained in RC components" received a range of scores from neutral to +4. One educator stated, "Administration should definitely be trained."

Summary

In this chapter only one factor came out of the q-sort. That factor's statements reflected the educators' value for the RCA. Participants spoke positively about the approach conveying strong endorsements for the components, social-emotional learning, and need for understanding of child development. The methods by which they promote their own professional growth with the approach varied; however, the common theme that resonated with each interview was participants' value for collaboration with their K-1 team. Participants enthusiastically indicated that RCA impacts their job satisfaction and that even with a low level of support on the part of the administration for RCA; they still have the resources needed to incorporate most of the RCA components.

Interestingly, the administrative issue that was frequently cited is the use of extrinsic rewards as a part of a building-wide PBIS, which do not complement the RCA classroom.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary of Findings

This mixed-methods approach was used to extrapolate information from educators to answer the following research questions:

1. How do educators support their personal Responsive Classroom professional development efforts?
2. Has the RCA implementation had an impact on job satisfaction?
3. From a practitioner's perspective, what supports are needed to aid implementation efforts?
4. From a practitioner's perspective, what impedes implementation efforts?
5. How does a district's administration impact implementation efforts?

Q methodology and phenomenology were used to answer the preceding research questions. Initially, a survey was administered to educators in two rural districts who had experience with the RCA. Forty-two educators responded to the open-ended survey questions. Survey questions were developed to elicit responses about educators' feelings and perceptions related to RCA implementation. The concourse was developed using survey question responses. Forty statements were taken from the educators' responses to the opened-ended survey questions.

Seven participants were invited to participate in a Warm-Up Assessment, q-sort, and semi-structured interviews. One additional participant engaged in the q-sort portion of research. The additional participant was an acting administrator. This administrator went through the initial RCA training when it was brought to the district. This educator only

participated in the q-sort portion of the research to add an administrator's perspective. Each of the eight participants received RCA training and have implemented the approach for fifteen years or more. Quantum analysis revealed one consistent viewpoint of the eight educators. Quantum analysis results combined with phenomenological research provided the needed information to offer recommendations and guide future implementation of RCA. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of findings related to existing research, limitations of research, and recommendations for future research.

Discussion of Findings and Relation to Existing Research

The five research questions were developed to generalize perceptions and lived experiences from educators surrounding implementation of the RCA and the impact RCA has on job satisfaction. One factor was found to have an Eigenvalue greater than one, capturing 70.34% of participants' perceptions regarding q-sort statements. This factor established the eight educators' value for the Responsive Classroom Approach, RCA. Participants had similar responses to a number of statements. As indicated in Figure 10 two participants, although within the same quadrant appear to be removed from the cluster of perspectives. It is not surprising that participant seven was not in the cluster of perspectives due to her extensive RCA training. Participant seven received formal training to be a Consulting Teacher through the NEFC. This participant was trained by Marlynn Clayton, who was one of the original six founders of the RCA. Participant seven is an acting administrator and looked at the statements through an administrator's lens. It is also not surprising that participant six was not in the cluster of perspectives due to her frustration with the administrations perceived lack of support for RCA.

After analyzing q-sort results, it became clear that educators had the most agreement on the following ideas: they believed the RCA was necessary; collaboration with colleagues supported RCA implementation; they had ample resources to support RCA implementation; and, RCA does not cause a loss of classroom instructional time. These ideas are discussed specifically for each research question.

Research Question #1

The first research question asked educators to reflect on their professional development efforts and share the avenues each used to grow with the RCA. All educators indicated that they strongly valued collaboration with peers specifically the collaboration they experienced with their kindergarten- first-grade team. Throughout the interviews the educators credited each other for the growth they experienced as a result of this team affect. The social aspects of teaching and learning are supported in the extant research as necessary for educators' professional job satisfaction (Johnson et al., 2012). Johnson et al. elaborated on this idea stating that there are social conditions that matter most to educators, "the social conditions-the school's culture, the principal's leadership, and relationships among colleagues-that predominate in predicting teachers' job satisfaction" (Johnson et al., 2012). The work of Johnson et al. corroborated the findings of the current study. Two respondents extended this collaborative idea to the training professionals that worked in their school from the Northeast Foundation for Children, NEFC, currently known as the Center for Responsive Schools. These training professionals worked in the district when the educators were initially trained and offered modeling of practice, coaching, and the collegial collaboration this team values so deeply.

As this idea was explored past the value placed on collaboration, each participant shared their own path to professional enlightenment. Some of the preferred professional development avenues included: observing fellow educators' implementation practices, being critiqued by fellow educators, watching RCA videos, using the RCA newsletter, online resources, using the RCA self-assessment, attending refresher courses, and reading books developed by NEFC and Center for Responsive Schools. All participants said they use some form of RCA related literature. The use of RCA literature was on a spectrum spanning very little use to frequent use. Although collaboration was the overarching preferred method to support RCA implementation, each participant had their own additional preferred modes to support implementation efforts.

The finding of the first research question could have positive implications for future implementation efforts, if there is an increase in opportunities for collaboration across the elementary grades, between trained and untrained educators. With the strong value placed on collegial collaboration, an increase in collaborative opportunities focused on RCA for all educators could increase the implementation efforts for the educator that are not using the RCA approach. In addition, it is recommended that the administration provides a variety of opportunities to access the RCA including: opportunities to observe fellow educators' implementation practices, provide opportunities for educators to critique each other, provide RCA videos, provide information to access the RCA newsletter and online resources; provide access to the RCA self-assessment, provide refresher courses, and provide a well-stocked library of books developed by NEFC and The Center for Responsive Schools. These recommendations could have positive implications for the advancement of the RCA in this district, resulting in school-wide

implementation and school-wide implementation would be the recommendation to gain the strongest benefits for students and educators.

Research Question #2

The second question attempted to explore the impact RCA implementation had on each participant with job satisfaction. The responses were overwhelmingly yes throughout each interview. Participants commented, “I would not be a teacher, if I didn’t have it”, as she referred to the impact RCA had on her personal job satisfaction. Another educator shared that the impact of RCA was, “life changing.” Yet another participant said, “Responsive Classroom, it’s necessary. It’s easily, not a separate thing that you teach. It is what you do, how you talk, how you organize. It’s everything.” According to these educators, RCA implementation can have a significant, positive impact on primary educators.

RCA implementation is a potential solution to the growing dissatisfaction of many educators in the field (Rimm-Kaufmann & Sawyer, 2004). The research of Rimm-Kaufmann and Sawyer revealed that educators teaching in districts that incorporated the RCA had stronger, positive attitudes towards the educational profession. This is consistent with the findings of the current study.

The factor with an Eigenvalue greater than one captured 70.34% of participants’ perceptions established the educators’ value for the Responsive Classroom Approach. This factor was brought to life through the stories shared by each participant. The semi-structured interviews complemented Q methodology, enhancing and explaining participants’ placements of statements. Participants’ value for RCA has had a positive impact on their job satisfaction.

Many of the participants told stories of children in their classrooms over the years. Some of these children exhibited extreme behavioral problems or disabilities. They shared how the components and philosophy of the RCA supported the struggling students. They also shared stories of the struggling student's peers and how they learned to accept, have empathy for, and use problem-solving strategies to include everyone and support each other's growth and development. The impact the RCA had on the culture and climate of each classroom was weaved into a number of the interviews. One example that exemplified the impact of this approach was shared by a participant. She said there was a student who exhibited exceptionally difficult behavioral challenges. She shared that this student, by himself, would have pushed her to her breaking point, if she had not implemented the RCA. She continued,

He was the first year we were trained. In October my principal told me I was getting a new student, and I wasn't going to like it, but it was a done deal ... She was giving him to me because he needed to be in my room. He was a kid that was removed from a classroom ... removed and put into another classroom and was being virtually instructed by an instructional aid in a room like this ... by the end of the year, you wouldn't even have known that he had all the behavior issues he did. And I attribute that all to Responsive Classroom I really, really do

This child was able to grow and flourish because of the emphasis the RCA places on developmentally appropriate practices, social emotional learning, and the ethics of care.

As shared in Chapter 2, the moral theory, *ethics of care*, identified by Carol Gilligan is based on the relational interdependence of human life (Rice, 2001). Children are born into the relational experience of being cared for at birth. They develop and grow through

relational experiences throughout their lives (Noddings, 2012). The ethics of care extends to relational experiences in school. This child was embraced by a community of learners with an educator who developed the skills through RCA to support growth. The educator had high levels of self-efficacy. This is consistent with the work of Rimm-Kauffman (2006) who reported when deeper levels of Responsive Classroom implementation were present there was a positive correlation shown with the levels of increase in disciplinary self-efficacy (Rimm-Kauffman, 2006).

The RCA provides the philosophy, teaching techniques, implementation structure, and support to transform classrooms into safe havens for children to learn and grow (Charney, 2002). When children have their physiological needs, safety needs, and needs for social connectedness, they have a foundation to thrive (Maslow, 1943). In this classroom environment his needs were met.

Many participants shared the value they had for the book *Yardsticks*, by Chip Wood, explaining that this book offered in-depth understanding of the developmental needs of students. In *Yardsticks* (2007), Wood offered ideas to support students as they grow developmentally. One participant shared an example of how this book supported her work with students saying,

I mean like I said, I was very authoritative. I didn't really understand the development of kids and why that was so important. And now, when things start to go wrong in my room, the first thing I do is pick up *Yardsticks*, and see what's changing in my class because something is. Normally, they are changing. And so with that, needs to come some changes from within for me to help them transition through whatever stage that they happen to be in. I remember the year kids were

chewing on their shirts... on holes in their shirts, and it was because they had that need. They were losing all their teeth. They were teething all over again, and they needed ... I remember giving them sugar free gum to chew, on a regular basis to fill that need, so they didn't need to do it with their shirts. It's truly been life changing. If somebody came in and said, you can no longer do Responsive Classroom, I truly wouldn't know what to do ... I can't 'cause it's imbedded into every part of the day from lining kids up, form the way they come into my room ... it's just a part of the whole thing. It's a philosophy. I always say that to people. It's not a program. It's what you believe about how kids learn and what kids need to be able to learn

Competent educators know the curriculum for instruction. Knowing curriculum, however, is only one component of a successful educator. Educators must also know their students and the specifics of child development (NAEYC, 2009; Wood, 2007). The book *Yardsticks* is a tool for educators to gain an understanding of child development and adjust their teaching to meet students' developmental needs.

It was glaringly clear that the participants in this study attribute many of their successes in education to the RCA. As shared in the narrative of the interviews with RCA implementation educators developed the skills and self-efficacy to positively impact student growth and development. Due to q-sort findings and anecdotal responses it can be concluded that RCA has had a positive impact on each participant's personal job satisfaction.

The finding of the second research question can have positive implications for future implementation efforts when this approach is implemented with fidelity. The findings

suggest the RCA has the potential to have an extreme, positive effect on educators and students. This approach should not be limited to select educators, but mandated and shared across the elementary grades. It is recommended that a copy the book *Yardsticks*, by Chip Wood, be purchased for all elementary educators. All participants shared the value of this book for understanding the developmental needs of their learners. All children should have the opportunity to grow through this approach.

Research Question #3

The third question attempted to uncover the supports needed to aid RCA implementation efforts. Collegial collaboration was unsurprisingly the number one recommend form of aid for these educators. All valued the support and sharing they received throughout their training and implementation from their combine kindergarten first grade team. Educators spoke highly of their in-house training experiences and training received through NEFC. One participant shared,

I think new staff coming in should have to go through some sort of Responsive Classroom training or be exposed to it somehow, observing other teachers who are using it, implementing it... I think refresher courses are fantastic. I think because they are coming up with new things that I'm not aware of right now myself. I think some of our in-service training some things like that should focus on refreshing or helping us learn new procedures or models of RC. I think it should be something that should be continuous, not just a one-time deal and then go do it

Professional development for educators and strong leadership is essential when implementing successful social-emotional learning programs (Durlak et al., 2008). The

educators in the current study valued RCA professional development and had the desire to share this approach with colleagues. A participant shared,

I think new staff coming in should have to go through some sort of RC training or be exposed to it somehow observing other teachers who are using it implementing it ... I think refresher courses are fantastic ... I think some of our in-service training, some things like that should focus on refreshing or helping us learn new procedures or models of Responsive Classroom. I think it should be something that should be continuous, not just a one-time deal and then go do it

These educators are dedicated to supporting RCA implementation and collaboration with interested educators. One stated, "I'm very fortunate, the group I work with they're all very accepting of RC they use it well if I have any questions there's someone I can turn to ask so but I don't think that's true for every grade level."

Community building is at the core of the RCA principles and teaching practices. The educators in the current study want to expand their community to include teachers across all grade levels. A school-wide approach to community building intensifies the positive impact on students' social, emotional, and cognitive growth (Audley &Casto, 2008). Comprehensive approaches yield greater benefits (Elias et al., 2003). There is reason to believe school-based prevention programs that are implemented with fidelity can have a positive impact on many concerns facing children including health, social and cognitive learning (Elias et al.). The current study revealed the positive impact this approach had on the seven teachers who participated.

The seven teachers who participated in the Warm-Up Assessment, q-sort, and semi-structured interviews were trained when they were teaching kindergarten or first grade.

Two began their teaching careers in Head Start before joining the public school. One taught second grade for a year, two taught third grade for a year, and the remaining participant taught fifth grade for one year. Four of the participants currently teach kindergarten and the remaining three teach first. These teachers have remained in the same district since they were initially introduced to the RCA.

Of the seven participants:

- one taught kindergarten and first grade;
- two had experience in Head Start through first grade;
- one had experience in kindergarten through second grade;
- one taught kindergarten through third grade;
- one taught kindergarten, first, and third grades; and
- one taught kindergarten, first, and fifth grades

Each educator in the current study spent the majority of her experience in kindergarten and first grades.

Knowing that the RCA has a profound impact on educators, this approach should be stressed more in-depth to avoid the attrition of educators from the profession. Continual turn-over in teaching staff forces administrators to continually hire. Educators, new to the profession, often lack experiences gained over time. This lack in continuity disrupts the coordinated instructional practices that provide vertical and horizontal articulation of curriculum across school districts (Johnson, Kraft, & Papay, 2011; Johnson et al., 2012). In addition, disjointed teaching can have a detrimental impact on student achievement.

As stated previously, RCA books were very beneficial as reported by participants. One participant commented, “I think, if there were people who didn’t want to take the

class, they could buy all those books and probably would be able to do it.” This participant also added,

One of the things that I have noticed, because people come to me a lot, because I’ve been trained is that sometimes they will make a component what they want it to be; instead of what it actually is. So, I think they really need to be open and honest

As she shared about self-reflection she stated, “I’m not perfect at it by any stretch of the imagination.” This statement was from one of the participants who had the most extensive training experiences and used the RCA Assessment book. Of the seven participants interviewed, only one was familiar with this self-assessment tool. The RCA assessment book would be beneficial for all participants.

Each participant referred positively to their training experiences with RCA. The Center for Responsive Schools offers a wide range of training opportunities including: weeklong workshops, one day workshops, coaching, online supports, training videos, and resource libraries. Educators shared that they could fully implement RCA in their grade-levels but believed school-wide involvement was ideal. They attributed the decline in school-wide involvement to a lack of administrative understanding and training of new educators.

The finding of the third research question can have positive implications for future implementation efforts, if the administration expands RCA training opportunities to include refresher courses for previously trained educators and RC Level I and II trainings for educators who have not previously had the training. If the seven educators were broken up in teams of two or three and moved across a variety of grade levels, these

educators could have the potential to spread the RCA throughout the elementary grades. This could be an additional, potential solution to achieve school-wide implementation. If this were a consideration, it is recommended that the principal mandate implementation and provide all the needed supports to infuse the RCA into all classrooms.

Research Question #4

Research question number four attempted to uncover obstacles to implementation from practitioners' perspectives. A few obstacles quickly became apparent. The participants overwhelmingly talked about the philosophical disdain they had regarding the extrinsic reward system that the school promotes. This issue was prevalent across interviews. Some participants found ways to minimally incorporate the Trojan tickets into their implementation of RCA. Others could not reconcile the extrinsic reward system with their philosophical beliefs surrounding their understanding of student motivation.

PBIS was brought to the district by the elementary school guidance counselor. The principal attempted to implement PBIS in grades kindergarten through six and was aware of the kindergarten and first grade teachers' frustration with the approach. When asked why the administration supports PBIS a teacher responded,

He believes PBIS will lessen discipline that he will have to deal with. In the SWISS data system it shows that the numbers of disciplines have gone down. Well yes, they have gone down because when we started this we had to record every little infraction. Now we don't record kids that have an Individualized Education Plan and kids with their own behavior management system. Before, we were recording everybody.

When comparing data, it is important to keep the same criteria to determine if PBIS has impacted student behavior.

Most of the educators in the current study did not appear to have an issue with the overall premise of PBIS. They agreed with the modeling of behaviors and clear expectations. Many agreed that the three overarching rules in PBIS mirrored the rules produced in the RCA. The frustration grew from the use of extrinsic rewards which is the main difference between PBIS and RCA.

Extrinsic rewards increase targeted behaviors, but the use of extrinsic rewards can have unforeseen damaging effects on individuals (Greene & Lepper, 2016). Extrinsic rewards can cause a narrow focus on features of targeted behaviors and improve responses to gain the reward, but this narrowing of focus can limit the parameters to which individuals may comply with features that do not fit the narrow definition of behaviors. At the same time, individuals tend to show a decrease of positive behaviors along other aspects that are not seen as pertinent to the receiving of the reward. This can alter an individual's decision-making to engage in an activity, how to participate in an activity, and when to stop participation in an activity which offers the promise of extrinsic rewards (Greene & Lepper, 2016).

When attempting to amend behavior with extrinsic rewards, an individual's lack of ability may be exposed. Using a reward system spotlights the achievement or failure of a skill. This can draw attention to the individual's ability or lack of ability as related to the achievement or failure of others. This can have a detrimental effect on an individual's feelings of self-efficacy and willingness to engage in and ability to take pleasure in the targeted activity (Greene and Lepper, 2016).

Because the RCA does not narrowly focus on behaviors with the promise of extrinsic rewards, children behave because it is the expectation. Children are not pitted against each other with the attainment or lack of attainment of an extrinsic reward. Children are taught to support each other's efforts to behave. The focus is not on individual attainment of rewards, but the development of the community of learners.

A fundamental issue with the use of extrinsic rewards as described by participants is the negative impact these rewards have on the classroom community. An educator shared, when a child receives an extrinsic reward for doing the "right thing" classmates often reply, "I was doing it too", wondering why they did not receive a reward for exhibiting the same behaviors. She also shared her issue with whole class rewards. She explained the use of the marble jar where the class gets a marble when they as a whole class behave. She shared, "with the marble jar you reward the whole class and, in the gym, if one child is not behaving and the class does not get the marble. This pits kids against each other and tears down the community." When an educator is focused on building a community of learners, it is important to pay careful attention to even the subtlest messages we send.

She also shared when referring to the Trojan tickets that her district "has found that they have to up the ante to manipulate students to behave. Students have said, I'm not going to work for what's in your prize box." In addition, this educator said, "kids in 5th grade write persuasive letters saying why they should get rid of the Trojan tickets ... they say all that happens is they give them to kids who are labeled as bad kids." She shared, "I don't believe in calling kids bad, but they are given to bad kids who are caught doing something good according to the kids."

When extrinsic rewards are used, children learn to behave to receive a reward from the adults. When the child is in an unstructured environment, or when they are not under the direct supervision of the educator who provides the extrinsic reward, many children lose the motivation to behave appropriately. Extrinsic rewards often work for the short term, but lack lasting effects. One of the participants explained,

Some teachers say they use extrinsic rewards because they work. It would work if I came into a room and slapped kids upside the head, screamed at them, put them in the corner, you can use whatever you want. It will work for the time being, but what does it do to the other things you are trying to accomplish in your room like building community, teaching positive behaviors when nobody else is looking, engaging students in academics, developing intrinsic motivation to do well in school ... Is that the right thing to do? There's lots of ways we can get children to behave, but does it accomplish the other academic and social goals you have for your classroom?

This educator is very conscientious about how she focuses her efforts on intrinsic motivation. She pays careful attention to even the slightest forms of manipulation. She has worked extensively to fine tune her teacher language to support student growth and development.

The RCA promotes intrinsic motivation. This is evident in the guiding principles of the approach: "The social curriculum is as important as the academic curriculum" (NEFC, 2007, p. 3). Educators do not look for the quick fix of an extrinsic reward to manipulate behavior. Educators take the time to teach the social curriculum and allow children to learn the best way to take care of each other and themselves. Another

principal, “The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction” (NEFC, 2007, p. 3), supported the learning that comes from the social issues that creep into each classroom naturally. The common issues of sharing, jealousy, and frustration become springboards for lessons where children are part of the problem and process finding solutions under the facilitation of trained educators. “To be successful academically and socially, children need to learn and practice specific social skills. These social skills are cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control (often referred to in the Responsive Classroom Approach with the acronym CARES)” (NEFC, 2007, p. 3). These social skills are part of the foundation for supporting behavioral growth.

Finally, the principle, “Knowing the children we teach – individually, culturally, and developmentally—is as important as knowing the content we teach” (NEFC, 2007, p. 3), asserts the RCA is not a one-size-fits-all model. Each child brings his own uniqueness to the classroom. With the RCA approach, educators are charged with the task of giving children as much freedom and responsibility as they are ready to handle. Children are observed carefully and given responsibility as they are developmentally ready to handle. Parameters are clearly established to support students when they are needed.

The principles are put into action with the 10 teaching practices educators use to support student growth and development socially, emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. The goal is to intrinsically motivate students to exhibit positive behaviors. This is accomplished when children are given opportunities to set positive behavior and academic goals for themselves, as learners. The students develop rules for the classroom and school, so all students can accomplish their goals.

Rules grow out of each student's hopes and dreams for the learning that will take place during the school year; if each child is going to have an opportunity to learn and grow, the class will need rules to support the learning that will take place; teachers and students work together to create three to five rules that will exemplify how students will care for self, others, and the school environment so each child can accomplish their social and academic goals. (NEFC, 2007, p. 4)

When learners are involved in this process they become intrinsically motivated to follow the rules and work toward the accomplishment of their self-directed goals.

The learning of appropriate behavior must transcend the classroom environment and extend to the playground, cafeteria, restrooms, bus, and beyond. The goal is for children to internalize the positive behaviors and act appropriately when adults are not watching. This is the reason extrinsic rewards are not valued and used.

With the RCA, children experience daily opportunities to practice and talk about appropriate ways to interact, behave, and take care of each other and themselves. One of the teaching practices that supports this learning is the daily Morning Meeting. At Morning Meeting, the entire class, including the teacher, joins to greet each other to participate in specially designed and scaffolded instruction that incorporates social and academic learning (Davis & Kriete, 2014). Morning Meeting sets the stage for the rest of each day's learning and the expectation for how individuals will treat each other and behave appropriately. This forum provides daily opportunities to learn about behavior and expectations for all.

This is not a utopic environment where perfect behavior happens daily. Educators understand that mistakes and misbehavior will occur. When this happens, teachers rely

on the teaching practices of the RCA to correct misbehavior and support students in making reparations when needed. Many of these practices fall under Collaborative Problem Solving which encompasses “a variety of strategies for problem-solving with students including: conferencing, role playing, class problem-solving meetings, and behavior plans; problem-solving is modeled and empowers children to recognize problems and solve them in cooperative, productive ways” (NEFC, 2007, p. 4).

With the RCA approach, 90% of discipline should be proactive. Proactive teaching structures include: Appropriate arrival time, Morning Meeting, Interactive Modeling, Guided Discoveries, Teacher Language, and Academic Choice. Students are given opportunities to practice desired behavior through these teaching practices. Educators are discouraged from giving *verbal stickers* (i.e., good job and I like the way you...). The reason “verbal stickers” are discouraged goes hand in hand with the disdain for extrinsic rewards. Students should not behave because it makes the teacher happy. RCA educators want children to behave because it is the right thing to do. Positive behavior is how the community supports each other, not just in the classroom, but beyond.

All educators valued the Morning Meeting. One educator shared that the need to fully implement Morning Meeting and address the social and emotional learning of students must surpass the need to force academic acquisition stating:

The one year probably when Common Core came out, they were pushing so much academics that I really shortened Morning Meeting”...”Half way through the year, I said no and went back [to incorporating a full Morning Meeting] because that’s the way to start your day off, know where your kids’ moods are at, and keep them in that routine

This educator's knowledge of social-emotional learning drove her decision to return to RCA implementation and support student needs with the Morning Meeting. This adjustment was consistent with the literature.

Curriculum must be fluid. It should continually change to meet the needs of children, not unrealistic federal mandates. Educators who know their children best need the autonomy to differentiate curriculum to meet each learner's needs. This autonomy has been lost to the federal mandates of changing programing including NCLB, Race to the Top (RTTT), and, now, Common Core. (Ward, 2015)

This teacher found this to be true after altering her curriculum to focus heavily on academics at the expense of the social-emotional learning that is crucial in today's classrooms. With the test-driven educational environments students are facing, it is essential that educators be cognizant of each child's developmental stages and abilities to provide them with developmentally appropriate instruction (NAEYC,2003; Wood, 2007, p. xiv).

Unfortunately, for many children, a large number of educators do not have the knowledge of social-emotional learning, developmental understanding, and RCA practices to make strong curricular decisions for children. The expectation to meet unrealistic standards is higher than ever, at a time when the number of struggling students is on the rise (Dufour & Marzano, 2011). Educators must have the knowledge, autonomy, and self-efficacy to support their learners.

A final impeding factor was volunteered by a participant. She reflected on many of the new educators she had worked with throughout her career and shared,

We've hired a lot of new teachers here and most of them have no philosophy what so ever ... That just blows my mind and maybe that is because I was a kid who struggled going through school ... School was hard for me ... I have a real strong philosophy about how kids learn ... Even before Responsive Classroom I had a real strong philosophy about how kids learn to read, what kids need in order to learn how to read, and most teachers have no philosophy. It's like I want to become a teacher because I've always wanted to become a teacher, but why? How do you believe kids learn? What would your classroom look like? So, if I were in education, [Teacher preparatory] I think that is something else I would make kids have to identify, what do you believe? ... One of the things that I've learned from being that very pushy person who always wanted everybody to do what I believed is that everybody has their own philosophy. You can make that philosophy work for you, if that is what you believe in, if you are still kind and respectful of children. Not everybody teaches the way I do and that's okay, but you have to know why you're doing it

Professional education programs guide students through a series of methods' courses with the aim of delivering the skills and knowledge for pre-service educators to use when they teach, but having the knowledge and skills, alone, does not prepare one to be an educator (Dall'Alba, 2009). Many pre-service educators are focused on learning what to teach, when to teach, and how to teach. These pre-service educators are missing some of the most important questions of all: Why do educators teach a particular curriculum? Why do students need differentiation? Why do educators need to contemplate the issues discussed in this research including understanding of: child development, social-

emotional learning, and intrinsic and extrinsic rewards? Unfortunately, students do not come with an educational blue print guiding educators with the how, when, and what of teaching. Educators need to dig deep and contemplate what they believe about students, and learning, and why they have these core beliefs.

The development of a philosophy takes time, contemplation, reflection, and self-discovery. This philosophy defines what it means to be an educator and how the educator's role affects the students in their care. Many pre-service educators are action-oriented. They just want to dive in and teach, but teaching begins before the students arrive. Teaching begins with a careful analysis of one's own core beliefs about children, learning, and the purpose of education. The development and reflection on an individual educator's philosophy has the potential to help define objectives and values that drive each individual practice (Van Note Chism, 1998), thus providing a guide through the educational journey.

One of the educators shared that the trainers and coaches with whom she worked pushed her to understand why each component of the approach was used, how the components impact child development, and how philosophies and components impacted the social, emotional, and academic learning of children. She also valued the same push for deeper understanding of practice that she received from the principal that first introduced her to the RCA. This educator shared strong convictions about what she believes.

The impeding implementation factors include: the use of extrinsic rewards, federal mandates, specifically Common Core, and the need for educator preparatory programs to help pre-service educators develop an educational philosophy. Many of these educators,

as reflected in the stories shared, have reconciled the intrinsic rewards and federal mandates with the RCA approach; however, these issues surrounding the lack of educational philosophy with new educators should be shared with the district's administration.

The finding of the fourth research question can have positive implications, if the administrator is open to the idea of marrying the two approaches. The two approaches have a great deal of similarity. The main point of contention is the use of external rewards. The recommendation is to eliminate the Trojan tickets and use more proactive discipline structures to support long-term positive behaviors from students.

The administration could offer support in the form of hiring practices. Potential employees should be screened for knowledge of the RCA and willingness to learn about the RCA. It is also suggested that new, potential employees should have to share their philosophical beliefs about children and learning. They should have an understanding of child development and the use of intrinsic motivation. Hiring is one of the most important decisions an administrator can make. Each new hire has the potential to affect the staff, community and hundreds of children across three decades or more. Finally, it is recommended that administration address the impact of federal mandates and how mandates should be approached in classrooms across the district.

Research Question #5

The fifth and final question explored the impact of administration on RCA implementation. Practitioners shared frustration with the continual turnover of administration in the district. They had experienced six different principals in the past 16 years. They spoke very fondly of the principal who introduced the district to the RCA.

They valued her approach to supporting implementation through coaching, asking thought-provoking questions, and gradually pushing educators' implementation efforts, all in a supportive nonthreatening way. They also valued the administrator who followed, appreciating her attempts to move the RCA to more of a school-wide approach by including the transportation personnel and cafeteria staff.

The approach these two early administrators used followed the literature of Fullan (2008) in *The Six Secrets of Change*. Fullan suggested that administration must first start with loving their educators and staff. This is shown by listening to, and providing engaging, purposeful, professional development opportunities, meaningful work, and a focus on building positive working relationships with colleagues and the entire school community. The initial two principals appeared to possess these qualities and made a lasting impression on their staff. This is evident in the successful implementation and collegial collaboration that have continued over the past 18 years. These administrators were trained alongside their staff. Reinforcing this statement, a participant shared,

When I first was introduced to it, I think there was a more active role in administration. They thought it was something that was valuable to us and valuable to the school. It seems like as the years have gone by we've gone through a lot of administrators. I wouldn't say that it's been looked at negatively because it hasn't, but I just don't think it's been stressed as much. I just think our current administration notices that some of us use it. I know in some of my evaluations that I've had that I've had comments about how the way I speak to the students is very kind and polite and it gets the kids motivated so but it really hasn't been I think something that's been stressed a lot lately

The educators in this study are longing for more administrative support and continued professional development.

Participants commented on the value of RCA related professional development. One shared,

It would be beneficial if some of our in-service days and things like that to have refresher courses. I think like I said, I think there are staff members who haven't had any experience with RC other than what they are hearing in the building ... I just feel that if it was something that was made available to everyone then I think it would benefit our building more

Although the educators in this study appreciated aspects of the current administration, they are looking to the administration to advance the RCA that they have found to be invaluable.

The educators in this study appreciated the current administration's scheduling of common lunch and preparation-planning times within grade levels. The common time supported opportunities for collegial collaboration. Unfortunately, this collaboration surrounding the RCA practices was limited to the kindergarten and first grade staff who received training and taught together for many years. Many new educators to the district did not receive this training and do not have the in-depth understanding to implement the components.

Many of the participants believed their current administrator philosophically believes in many of the components of the RCA. According to participants many of the stories the administrator shared and in-service activities that were planned reflect an appreciation for the philosophy. Administrators have the difficult job of caring for hundreds of

children, dealing with the needs of staff, adhering to federal mandates, dealing with the public, following directives from school boards and superintendents, knowing and supporting curriculum over, sometimes, large spans of grade-levels in all curricular areas including, but not limited to ELA, math, science, social studies, art, music, and technology. They must also attend to discipline, nursing, bussing, cafeteria, special education, sports, Parent Teacher Organizations, and local community groups, for example. As the role of administrators is reviewed, it becomes clear that it is difficult to be an administrator with the exorbitant responsibilities that the position entails.

This is a difficult job and it is unrealistic to expect an administrator to be an expert in all areas of focus. Some administrators are fortunate to have experience with the RCA. Some administrators are fortunate to have used the RCA when they were classroom educators. The administrator in this district is fortunate to have an in-house trainer and six additional dedicated educators who are passionate and willing to share their implementation experiences, resources, and value for RCA.

These educators are craving more administrative understanding and support of RCA practices. Research reveals the essential role administrators play in the implementation and fidelity of implementation (Abry et al., 2013). A review of literature surrounding the RCA highlights the importance of fidelity of implementation to achieve the positive effects of social and emotional learning (Abry et al.). To attain desired results, particular attention must be given to professional development and the effects on the quality of implementation. These educators would like to see school-wide implementation.

The finding of the fifth and final research question can have positive implications for future implementation efforts if the administration provided additional professional

development opportunities, set clear expectations for all educators surrounding implementation of the RCA, provided a variety of the RCA resources, provided increased collaboration opportunities for educators past kindergarten and first grade, and hired new educators who have a strong philosophy grounded in the ethics of care, social-emotional learning, and the RCA. It is also recommended that all elementary administration attend RC Level I and II trainings. In addition, it is recommended that administration work closely with the seven participants in this study to gain a full understanding of the RCA and implications for implementation in classrooms and across the elementary grades. This will support administration understanding of the positive impact RCA can have for all children and staff.

Implications

The RCA has the potential to positively impact educators' professional job satisfaction. This approach should not be limited to select educators but shared with all. Educators who have strong buy-in and implementation fidelity experience a transformation to the day-to-day interactions with students as they engage learners in meaningful social and academic learning (Blahus, 2013). These educators' interview responses confirm fidelity of implementation, if their accounts are accurate. According to participants each incorporates all components of the RCA. This approach should not be limited to the kindergarten and first grade team. A school-wide approach would best service students and educators in this district. All educators should have the tools to support learning. It is evident from this research that the RCA had the potential to provide the tools. With training, collegial collaboration, and resources to meet each

educator's learning needs, this approach can have a lasting impact on educators and students.

Limitations of the Study

Q methodology is a mixed-methods approach in which statements that represent a larger number of individuals are used by a smaller group of individuals to understand what are the subjective perspectives on a particular phenomenon. As such, Q methodology is limited, in that the concourse statements can only be generalized to the larger population (i.e., all educators who use the RCA), making the generalizability limited by those who participated in providing feedback for the concourse development. For the current investigation, the q-sorters were selected through a purposive sampling approach. The individuals invited to participate were individuals who had 7-10 years of experience with the RCA. As such, the subjective perspective revealed in the current study can, at best, be generalized to those individuals who have 7-10 years' experience using the RCA.

In addition, the generalizability of the current study is limited to small rural schools and may not be applicable to urban and suburban school settings. The focus is on the implementation experiences of self-contained, early primary kindergarten, and first grade educators. The experiences of these educators may not be transferable to upper elementary educators. Upper elementary educators typically experience different demands, some of which include an increase in standardized testing, which places a stronger focus on content-driven instruction leaving limited time for a social and academic balance to curriculum. Educators in self-contained settings can focus their RCA efforts on one class of students over an entire school day. In departmentalized

settings, educators must divide their focus on multiple groups of children with only portions of the day to devote to community building.

A final limiting factor is the self-reported level of fidelity of the RCA implementation. Self-reporting can be a limiting factor because it is based on each educator's personal self-reflections. The Warm-Up Assessment and participant responses to the semi-structured interviews provided two opportunities for self-reporting.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are a number of recommendations for additional research. The current study uncovered the strong impact the RCA has on professional job satisfaction for elementary educators. Job satisfaction is a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p. 1304). First, an exploration of level of job satisfaction compared to level of RCA implementation across a larger number of participants would expand upon the results of the current study and have the potential to reveal more information to further advocate for the RCA. The idea of job satisfaction related to the RCA was explored through the work of Rimm-Kaufmann and Sawyer (2004) but was limited to educators with one-year of implementation experience. Educators who taught in schools following their first year of RC training reported stronger satisfaction with their profession. In contrast, educators who taught in schools that were not implementing RC philosophies reported lower satisfaction with their profession (Rimm-Kaufmann & Sawyer, 2004). The current study could be expanded with additional research comparing levels of implementation and levels of job satisfaction. Additionally, the work of Rimm-Kauffman (2004) could be expanded upon to look at implementation past the first year.

Secondly, does the level of RC implementation impact the level of knowing individual students socially, emotionally, developmentally, and academically? A positive school and classroom culture must provide a safe environment where children feel known and cared for in order for children to take risks and grow (NEFC, 2016). Further research is needed to explore the phenomenon of knowing students and their being known.

Another issue brought to light by the current research is the frustration between implementation of PBIS and the RCA. Future research is needed to compare the use of RCA and PBIS in a single district to determine which has higher effects related to student behavior, professional job satisfaction, and impact on collegial collaboration. Rimm-Kaufman and Sawyer (2007) explored the features and predictors of teacher collaboration and the effects the RCA has on teacher collaboration. This research resulted in the conclusion that teachers' positive perceptions of school-wide shared values equate to stronger collaboration. Teachers who used resources and incorporated more components of the RCA appeared to partake in and place stronger value in collaboration practices. As seen in the work of Rimm-Kauffman and Sawyer (2007), schools implementing the RCA saw an increase in professional collaboration when compared to schools not implementing Responsive Classroom practices (Rimm-Kaufman & Sawyer, 2007). How does this finding correspond with PBIS as compared to RCA implementation within the same district?

Additional research focused on implementation in districts where the two approaches marry and coexist could uncover strategies to support co-implementation of the two approaches.

Lastly, a study of the culture developed in this kindergarten and first grade team is necessary to explore how the educators of this team support each other and continue with implementation after 18 years, with little direction from administration and little implementation in other grade levels. Cultural change does not come from outside the school walls; cultural change happens within. Having a lasting impact on cultural change in a district can be one of the most difficult tasks of reformers (Grogan, 2013). This team has developed their own unique cultural from within.

Conclusion

The seven educators who participated in this research study appear to have developed into a microcosm, exemplifying the principles of the RCA. They have created a culture and climate, from within, of support and collegial sharing. This collegial relationship has bonded these educators and permeated each of the participants' school experience to support their implementation efforts, and, ultimately, positively impact job satisfaction. After 18 years, these educators continue to implement the RCA with fidelity due to the culture the educators have created. This finding is consistent with the literature of Grogan (2013). Collaboration is beneficial as educators begin to rely on each other to implement strategies and work through implementation struggles. One of the participants said it best when she shared, "One of the biggest things is the community that is built during the first six weeks of school because kids really get to know each other and celebrate that they are alike and different and that's okay." This community permeates past the walls of each classroom into the adult community of learners.

References

- Abry, T., Brewer, A., Larsen, R., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. (2013). The influence of fidelity of implementation on teacher-student interaction quality in the context of randomized controlled trial of the responsive classroom approach. *Journal of School Psychology, 43*, 437-453.
- Almon, J., & Miller, E. (2009). Crisis in the kindergarten: Why children need to play in school. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED504839>
- Arby, T., Curby, T., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. (2013). Do emotional support and classroom organization earlier in the year set the stage for higher quality instruction. *Journal of Psychology, 51*, 557-569.
- Armstrong, A. (2012, May). Build higher levels of job satisfaction. *The Leading Teacher, 7*(6), 3-5.
- Audley, J., & Casto, K. (2008). *In our school: Building community in elementary schools*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Balain, J. R., Balain, S., Booth, A., Carroll, C., Patterson, M., & Wood, S. (2007, November 30). A conceptual framework for implementation fidelity. Retrieved from *Implementation Science*. doi: org/10.1186/1748-5908-2-40
- Bechtel, L. (2004). Doing morning meeting: The essential components. *Viewing Guide*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Bechtel, L., & Kriete, R. (2002). *The morning meeting book* (Expanded ed.). Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Billingsley, B., & McLeskey, J. (2008). How does quality and stability of the teaching force influence the research-to-practice gap? *Sage Journals, 293-305*.
- Blahus, R. A. (2013). *Perceptions of primary teachers using responsive classroom in the era of no child left behind*. (Doctoral dissertation). Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA.
- Bogler, R. (2001). The influence of leadership style on teacher job satisfaction. *Educational Administration, 662-683*.
- Brock, L. L., Chiong, C., Grimm, K., Nishida, T., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. (2008). Children's perceptions of the classroom environment and social and academic performance: A longitudinal analysis of the contribution of the responsive classroom approach. *Journal of School Psychology, 129-149*.

- Brown, S. R. (1993). A primer on q methodology. *Operant Subjectivity*, 91-138.
- CASEL. (2017). Retrieved from www.casel.org
- Center for Responsive Schools. (2016). *The joyful classroom*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Chadwick, K. (2004). *Improving schools through community engagement*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Charney, R. (2002). *Teaching children to care*. Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Chen, J., Horsch, P., & Wagner, S. (2002). The responsive classroom approach: A caring, respectful school environment as a context for development. *Education and Urban Society*, 365-383.
- Children, N. F. (2006). *Creating a safe & friendly school lunchroom, hallways, playground, and more...* Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Chiu, Y., & Rimm-Kaufman, S. (2007). Promoting social and academic competence in the classroom: An intervention study examining the contribution of the responsive classroom approach. *Psychology in the Schools*, 397-414.
- Clayton, M., Rosalea, F. S., Henry, E., & Porter, D. (2006). *Morning meeting messages, K-6: 180 sample charts from three classrooms*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Commons, M. L., & Harrigan, W. J. (2015). Replacing Maslow's needs hierarchy with an account based on stage and value. *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, 20(1), 24-31.
- Coogan, J., & Herrington, N. (2011, October). Q methodology: An overview. *Research in Secondary Teacher Education*, 24-28.
- Correa-Connolly, M. (2004). *99 activities and greetings*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Dall'Alba, G. (2009). Learning professional ways of being: Ambiguities of becoming. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41(1), 34-45.
- Dalton, J., & Watson, M. (1997). *Among friends: Classrooms where caring and learning prevail*. Oakland, CA: Developmental Studies Center.
- Davis, C., & Kriete, R. (2014). *The morning meeting book*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

- Davis, C., & Yang, A. (2005). *Parents & teachers working together*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Denton, P. (2005). *Learning through academic choice*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Denton, P. (2007). *The power of our words*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Denton, P., & Kriete, R. (2000). *The first six weeks of school*. Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Dousis, A., Berry Wilson, M., & Kriete, R. (2010). *Doing math in morning meeting: 150 quick activities that connect to your curriculum*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Dufour, R., & Marzano, R. J. (2011). *Leaders of learning*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Durlak, J., Dymnicki, A., Pachan, M., Payton, J., Schellinger, K. B., & Taylor, R. D. (2008). *The positive impact of social and emotional learning for kindergarten to eighth-grade students*. Chicago, IL: CASTEL.
- Elias, M., Fredericks, L., Greenberg, M., O'Brien, U., Resnik, H., Weissberg, R., & Zins, J. E. (2003). Enhancing school-based prevention and youth development through coordinated social, emotional, and academic learning. *American Psychologist*, 466-474.
- Fisher, R. S., Henry, E., & Porter, D. (2006). *Morning meeting messages*. Turners Falls, MA: North East Foundation for Children.
- Fullan, M. (2008). *The six secrets of change*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Gilligan, C. (2003). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ginott, G. H. (1972). *Teacher and child: A book for parents and teachers*. Ann Arbor, MI: Macmillan.
- Graves, D. (1994). *A fresh look at writing*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Graves, D. H. (2006). *A sea of faces: The importance of knowing your students*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Greene, A., Jensen, D., Madden, T., Maloon, R., & Stark, E. (2014). Job satisfaction among elementary educators. Retrieved from circle.adventist.org.

- Grogan, M. (2013). *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Grogan, T. (2003). *Boys and girls together improving gender relationships in k-6 classrooms*. Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2001). Early teacher - child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Child Development*, 625-638.
- Hamre, B., & Pianta, R. (2005). Can instructional and emotional support in the first-grade classroom make a difference for children at risk of school failure? *Child Development*, 949-967.
- Hare, D., McIntosh, C., Sheldrick, R., & Westbrook, J. (2013). Validity of dementia care mapping on a neuro-rehabilitation ward: Q-methodology with staff and patients. Retrieved from *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 35(19). doi: 103109109638288
- Hurst, C. O., & Otis, R. (1999). *Friends and relations using literature with social themes k-2*. Greenfield, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/care-eth/>
- Johnson, S. M., Kraft, M. A., & Papay, J. P. (2012). *How context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement*. Retrieved from <http://scholar.harvard.edu/mkraft/publications/how-context-matters-high-need-schools-effects-teachers%E@%80%99-working-conditions-their>
- Jones, S. M., & Kahn, J. (2017). *The evidence base for how we learn supporting students' social, emotional, and academic development*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute.
- Krulick, A. (2017). *21st century job market*. Retrieved from <https://www.debt.org/jobs/21st-century/>
- Levine, E., & Tamburrino, M. (2013). Bullying among young children: Strategies for prevention. *Early Childhood Education*, 271-278.
- Locke, J. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1297-1343.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 370-396.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.

- MetLife. (2011). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher*. New York, NY: MetLife.
- Moomaw, W., & Pearson, C. L. (2005). The relationship between teacher autonomy and stress, work satisfaction, empowerment, and professionalism. *Educational Research Quarterly*, 38-54.
- NAEYC. (2003). *Early childhood curriculum, assessment, and program evaluation: Building an effective, accountable system in programs for children birth through age 8*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- NAEYC. (2009). *Developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs serving children from birth through age 8*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children. Retrieved from National Association for the Education Of Young Children.
- NEFC. (2005). *Responsive classroom level II resource book*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- NEFC. (2006). *Creating a safe & friendly school*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- NEFC. (2009). *The responsive classroom assessment*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- NEFC. (2017). *Responsive classroom*. Retrieved from www.responsiveclassroom.org
- Nieto, S. (2010). *A light in their eyes*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- No Child Left Behind. (2001). Retrieved from <http://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/no-child-left-behind-overview-definition-summary.html?cmp=cpc-goog-ew-dynamic+ads&cciv=dynamic+ads...>
- Noddings, N. (2010). Moral education and caring. *Theory and Research in Education*, 145-151.
- Noddings, N. (2012). The caring relation in teaching. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38(6), 771-781.
- Northeast Foundation for Children. (2007). *Responsive classroom level I resource book*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Pianta, R. (2003). Commentary: Implementation, sustainability, and scaling up in school context: Can school psychology make the shift? *School Psychology Review*, 331-335.

- Rice, C. J. (2001, Fall). Teacher's level of care. *Education*, 122(1), 102-106.
- Rimm-Kauffman, S. E. (2006). *Social and academic learning study on the contribution of the responsive classroom approach*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Sandilos, L. (2017). Improving students' relationships with teachers to provide essential support for learning. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/educational/k12/relationships.aspx>
- Rimm-Kaufmann, S., & Sawyer, B. (2004). Primary-grade teachers' self-efficacy belief, attitudes toward teaching, and discipline and teaching practice priorities in relation to the responsive classroom approach. *The Elementary School Journal*, 321-341.
- Rimm-Kaufman, S. E., & Sawyer, B. (2007). Teacher collaboration in the context of the responsive classroom approach. *Teachers and Teaching*, 211-245.
- Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2008). Does school context matter? Relations with teacher burnout and job satisfaction. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 518-525.
- Stenner, P., & Watts, S. (2012). *Doing q methodological research theory, method and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strauss, V. (2013, February 21). U.S. teachers' job satisfaction craters. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/.../u-s-teachers-job-satisfaction-craters-report>
- Sullivan, C. R., & Thompson, T. S. (2008). *Teaching insights framing the big picture of teaching*. Broomfield, CO: Manufacturing Teaching Insights LLC.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling: U.S. Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- Van Note Chism, N. (1998). Developing a philosophy of teaching statement . *Essays on Teaching Excellence: Toward the Best in the Academy*, 9(3), 1-2.
- Walker, T. (2012, March 7). NEAtoday. Retrieved from <http://neatoday.org/2012/03/07/survey-teacher-job-satisfaction-drops-to-new-low-2/>
- Ward, S. (2015, April 10). Why has teacher morale plummeted? Retrieved from <http://www.newsweek.com/why-has-teacher-morale-plummeted-321447>

Wood, C. (2007). *Yardsticks: Children in the classroom ages 4-14*. Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

Appendix A

Responsive Classroom Participant Survey

My name is Tammy Mild, and I am a doctoral student at Youngstown State University. I am gathering information about Responsive Classroom implementation. This brief survey, which should take no longer than 15 minutes to complete, will provide insight surrounding your perceptions, and opinions about Responsive Classroom.

Participation is voluntary. Your identity will not be collected. Participants must be at least 18 years old. Submission of this survey implies your consent. If you have any questions concerning this research, please feel free to contact me at tmild@wmasd.k12.pa.us You may also contact Dr. Karen Larwin at (330)-941-2231 or khlarwin@ysu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research project, you may contact the Office of Research at Youngstown State University at (330)941-2377 or

YSUIRB@ysu.edu.

1. How many years have you worked in an elementary school setting?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 or more years

2. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- High School Diploma
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate or other

3. How many years have you implemented or had experience with Responsive Classroom?

- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 or more years

4. This section of the survey contains eight Responsive Classroom

Components. Reflect on the implementation of Responsive Classroom components and indicate the level of implementation in your classroom.

	No Implementation	Beginning Implementation	Somewhat Implemented	Working Toward Full Implementation	Full Successful Implementation
Arrival Time	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Interactive Modeling	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Morning Meeting	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Guided Discovery	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Academic Choice	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Classroom Organization	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Classroom Management & Teacher Language	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation
Working with Families	<input type="radio"/> No Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Beginning Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Somewhat Implemented	<input type="radio"/> Working Toward Full Implementation	<input type="radio"/> Full Successful Implementation

5. What has supported Responsive Classroom implementation efforts in your classroom?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

6. What obstacles have you encountered that have negatively impacted your Responsive Classroom implementation efforts?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

7. What has been the impact of the Responsive Classroom implementation on the academic curriculum in your classroom?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

8. What has been the impact of the Responsive Classroom implementation on the social curriculum in your classroom?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

9. What have you learned as a result of implementing Responsive Classroom?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features a vertical scrollbar on the right side and a horizontal scrollbar at the bottom, both with standard arrow and track icons.

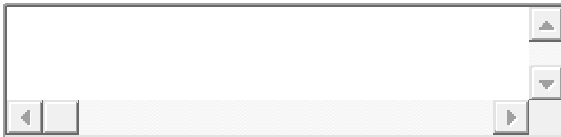
10. What could administration do to better support your implementation of Responsive Classroom?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features standard scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

11. What advice would you give to a teacher who was just beginning the Responsive Classroom implementation process?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features standard scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

12. What other information can you share that would help me to understand your experience with the Responsive Classroom implementation?

An empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin black border. It features standard scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

APPENDIX B

The Warm-Up Assessment

<p>Arrival Time Teacher-Student Interaction</p> <p>As students arrive in my classroom, I...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>...am busy with preparations for the day or other tasks, and I usually interact individually with only a few students as they enter the classroom.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>...welcome and interact individually with many students as they enter the classroom.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>...welcome and interact individually with <i>all or almost all students</i> as they enter the classroom, and the majority of individual interactions are personal rather than procedural (that is, the majority of interactions show that I know students on a personal level and are not centered on students going about the morning routine).</p>
<p>Arrival Time Students' Behavior at Arrival Time</p> <p>At arrival time...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>...most students are noisy, disorganized, or preoccupied with friendship issues</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>...many or most students demonstrate calm behavior, use soft or medium voices, and know their morning tasks.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>...all or almost all students demonstrate calm behavior, use soft or medium voices, and know their morning tasks.</p>
<p>Morning Meeting Academic Content of the Four Components (Greeting, Sharing, Group Activity, Morning Message)</p> <p>In our Morning Meetings...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>...usually no components incorporate academic content directly related to our curriculum or student needs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>...usually one component incorporates academic content directly related to our curriculum or student needs.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>...usually two or more components incorporate academic content directly related to our curriculum or student needs in a fun way that builds community.</p>
<p>Morning Meeting Order</p> <p>Morning Meetings in our class...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>...usually do not follow the order of (1) greeting, (2) sharing, (3) group activity, and (4) morning message.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>...sometimes do follow the order of (1) greeting, (2) sharing, (3) group activity, and (4) morning message.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>...usually do follow the order of (1) greeting, (2) sharing, (3) group activity, and (4) morning message.</p>

Adapted from the Responsive Classroom Assessment

The Warm-Up Assessment

<p>Guided Discovery Generating ideas for Use</p> <p>Generally...</p>	<p>1</p> <p>...students do not generate ideas for use of the material(s) and/or ideas for use of the material(s) come primarily from me</p>	<p>3</p> <p>...students generate one or two ideas for use of the material(s).</p>	<p>5</p> <p>...students generate at least three or four ideas for use of the material(s).</p>
<p>Academic Choice Learning Goal</p> <p>The learning goal of Academic Choice is...</p>	<p>1</p> <p>...often not clearly stated for students.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>...sometimes clearly stated for students.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>...usually clearly stated for students.</p>
<p>Academic Choice Characteristics of Choices</p> <p>Students often can choose...</p>	<p>1</p> <p>...only with whom to work, where to work, or when to do work.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>...only among closed-ended choices about what kind of work to do, how to do the work, or both.</p> <p><i>For example, I offer choices among worksheets or other tasks with only one or two correct outcomes.</i></p>	<p>5</p> <p>...among open-ended choices about what kind of work to do, how to do the work, or both.</p> <p><i>For example, I allow students to choose an animal to learn about or to choose how to show what they learned about an assigned animal or to choose both what animal to study and how to show what they learned</i></p>
<p>Academic Choice Teacher Facilitation</p> <p>Usually while students are working on their choices, I...</p>	<p>1</p> <p>...Observe the whole class or work on teacher tasks and do not engage with individual students.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>...engage with individual students but do not frequently use open-ended questions or reinforcing language.</p> <p><i>"For example, I might say, "I like/notice how you drew your seal" or ask, "Did you learn that seals have fat to keep them warm?"</i></p>	<p>5</p> <p>...engage with individual students and use many open-ended questions and reinforcing language to foster their thinking and curiosity and ensure they're meeting the learning goal.</p> <p><i>For example, I might ask, "What are you learning about the seal?" or "What is interesting to you about this Question" or I might say, "I see you're showing lots of ways seals defend themselves."</i></p>

Adapted from the Responsive Classroom Assessment

The Warm-Up Assessment

<p>Classroom Organization Work Spaces</p> <p>Students primarily work...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... at desks arranged in rows or a U shape.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... at desks arranged in clusters or at tables with other students.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... in various seating arrangements depending on their developmental and individual needs: whole group, small group, and individual.</p>
<p>Classroom Organization Visibility of Time-Out Place</p> <p>My classroom has...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... at pre-designated time-out place or a place in which I <i>sometimes</i> cannot see the child.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... a pre-designated time-out place in which I <i>often</i> can see the child.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... a pre-designated time-out place in which I <i>always or almost always</i> can see the child.</p>
<p>Classroom Management Using Signals</p> <p>Usually, when I need students' attention, I...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... raise my voice or tell children "shhh."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... sometimes use a predictable signal to gain the attention of my class but sometimes raise my voice or tell children "shhh."</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>...consistently use a predictable signal to gain the attention of my class throughout the day.</p> <p><i>For example, every time I want to gain the class's attention I raise my hand, clap, use a chime, etc.</i></p>
<p>Classroom Management Tone and Rate of Speech</p> <p>When talking to students, I...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... often speak with a raised, angry, pleading, or rushed voice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... sometimes speak with a raised, angry, pleading, or rushed voice.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... typically speak with a calm, respectful, and firm voice.</p>

Adapted from the Responsive Classroom Assessment

The Warm-Up Assessment

<p>Classroom Management Reinforcing</p> <p>When I am reinforcing a student who is behaving appropriately, I will typically...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... express general approval.</p> <p><i>For example, I might say, "Good job, Marisa" or "Nice drawing."</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... express approval for concrete and specific behaviors.</p> <p><i>For example, I might say, "I like how lots of people pushed in their chairs" or "Marisa, good job cleaning up your materials faster today."</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... describe concrete and specific behaviors.</p> <p><i>For example, I might say, "I see lots of people who remembered to push in their chairs" or "Marisa, I notice that you cleaned up your materials faster today."</i></p>
<p>Classroom Management Redirecting</p> <p>When redirecting students, I...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... often phrase the command as a question.</p> <p><i>For example, I might ask, "Maria, do you want me to take those toys away?" or "Sonya, would you sit down, please?"</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... sometimes give brief directions in the form of a statement but sometimes phrase command as a question.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... typically give brief and nonnegotiable directions in the form of a statement.</p> <p><i>For example, I might say, "Maria, hands in your lap" or "Sonya, walk."</i></p>
<p>Classroom Management Relevant</p> <p>The consequences I use in my classroom are...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... often predetermined.</p> <p><i>For example, I have the charts of increasingly severe consequences based on numbers of tallied misbehaviors or lists of consequences for certain misbehaviors, such as "No homework = no recess."</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... not predetermined but often unrelated to the misbehavior or its context.</p> <p><i>For example, I usually use loss of recess or time-out for not doing homework regardless of individual circumstances.</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... not predetermined and also related to what will help the particular student calm down and/or repair damage resulting from the misbehavior.</p> <p><i>For example, a student who draws on a desk may clean the desk, move to another location to work for a while, or take a time-out, depending on what will most help the particular student stop the behavior.</i></p>
<p>Classroom Management Introduction of Logical Consequences</p> <p>In the first weeks of school, after we create rules, I...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... tell the children about types of consequences I will use for misbehavior and/or post a list of consequences.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... introduce logical consequences by naming the three types and/or showing children how to go to time-out.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... introduce logical consequences by discussing ways that we all break the rules and need help following them sometimes. Then I teach children how to go to time-out.</p>

Adapted from the Responsive Classroom Assessment

The Warm-Up Assessment

<p>Classroom Management Purpose of Time-Out</p> <p>I teach students that time-out is a place for...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... punishing bad behavior.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... thinking about what they did wrong.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... relaxing and feeling more in control.</p>	
<p>Classroom Management Going to Time-Out</p> <p>When students who must go to time-out attempt to stall, argue, or create disruptions, I...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>... often engage with the students by negotiating or arguing with them or ignore them or try to stop the behavior by lecturing, embarrassing, or using punishments, such as sending them to the principal.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>... sometimes ignore or punish the students but sometimes call for a buddy teacher.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>... usually call for a buddy teacher and have the students removed from the classroom until they are calm.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">(N/A)</p> <p>No students ever attempt to stall, argue, or create disruptions when they must go to time-out.</p>

Adapted from the Responsive Classroom Assessment

Appendix C

Interview Guide

- I. Greeting
 - A. Thank you for your participation in this study. As I have shared, I am interested in educators' experiences and perceptions related to the implementation of The Responsive Classroom Approach.
 - B. Overview: In our time together I have a short RC self-assessment warm-up activity; a statement sorting activity, called a Qsort; and a few short questions to help better understand your implementation experiences.
 - C. Warm-up activity
 - a. The Responsive Classroom self-assessment will be introduced. Participants will be instructed to read each statement and determine if they fall into the 1,3 or 5 category on the rubric.
 - D. Qsort
 - a. Participants will sort concourse statements into three categories: strongly agree, neutral, and strongly disagree.
 - b. Participants will place statements on the Qgrid.
 - c. A photograph will be taken of each participant's Qgrid.

E. Interview Procedures: I will audio-record this interview to ensure that I capture your perspectives and experiences accurately. I may take notes during the interview to collect information to guide follow-up questions. All personally identifying information will be altered to protect your anonymity.

F. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

G. Begin audio recording

H. Begin with straight forward questions to ease participant into the interview process Ex. Years in teaching profession, years implementing RCA, grade levels taught, current grade level, etc.

II. Semi-structured interview

6. When and by whom were you first introduced to RC?

7. What trainings have you had related to RC?

8. Did your training adequately prepare you for implementation and how?

9. What do components of RC use in your classroom?

10. How do you support your professional growth and implementation efforts surrounding RC? (learning walks, observation of fellow educators, collaboration, videos, resource library, online resources/news letters/articles, support from consulting educators, mandates from administration, etc...)

11. Do you read RC professional literature? What books have you found to be most valuable?

12. What has administrations' role been in your implementation efforts?

13. Have your implementation efforts been deterred in any way? If yes, how?

14. Has RCA implementation had an impact on your job satisfaction? If yes, how?
15. If you could design the ultimate implementation supports for a new teacher, what would that look like and include?

III. Summary Questions

- A. What experiences related to RC implementation would you like to discuss that I have not specifically addressed in this interview?
- B. How would you summarize your experiences with RC implementation?

IV. Closing

- A. I want to thank you for your time and willingness to share your experiences and perceptions surrounding the RCA.

Appendix D

Sort Items : Not Matching

-4: 25 26 30 39
-3: 7 9 16 19 25 30
-2: 1 4 5 6 7 12 14 19 26 37
-1: 2 4 8 11 22 27 32 34
0: 1 5 12 20 30 39 40
1 1 5 12 14 20 26 29 30 31 33 39 36 37
2 9 17 22 25 27 28 35 36 38 39
3: 15 22 24 29 31
4

One match:

-4: 4 13 32
-3 3 13
-2: 30 32 33
-1: 5 9 12 16 25 30 33 37
0: 8 19 22 25 27 35
1 8 14 18 10 21 22 28 34
2 16 20 34
3 35 36 40

4 15 17 20 22 23 28 33 36 39

Appendix E

Numbered Concourse Statements

1. It is difficult to implement RC without school-wide implementation
2. I do not have enough resources and support to implement RC
3. RC is less effective with older elementary students
4. RC causes a loss of additional classroom instruction time
5. Admin needs to recognize RC looks different at different grades
6. High class size is an obstacle to RC implementation
7. I do not believe RC is necessary
8. Lack of follow-up training has negatively impacted Responsive Classroom implementation
9. Exceptional negative behavior has deterred implementation efforts
10. I do not feel we are moving forward with RC implementation
11. It is difficult to implement RC with continual changes in curriculum and teaching requirements
12. All students do not respond to RC teacher language
13. I do not have time in my schedule to adequately implement RC
14. RC online resources and newsletter have supported implementation
15. The team of teachers I work with support my implementation efforts
16. RC resource books have supported RC implementation

17. Because of RC implementation students are more accepting of each other's differences
18. Components of RC have been invaluable in my classroom
19. RC videos have supported my implementation efforts
20. Modeling has made the biggest impact in my classroom
21. Administration has supported implementation with professional development opportunities
22. With RC implementation students become intrinsically motivated to do their best
23. Students take better care of each other because of their ownership and the sense of community
24. Collaboration with colleagues has supported RC implementation
25. Administration has provided collaboration time with other teachers
26. Administration has supported RC implementation efforts in my classroom
27. Observing other teachers has supported my implementation
28. I have learned to build a community of learners who works together and problem solves
29. RC allows students to get to know each other better because of their interaction with each other
30. There is nothing administration could do to better support my implementation efforts
31. Speaking to children as human beings gets better results rather than being an authoritarian
32. I am not sure if there has been a major impact as a result of RC implementation

33. Administration needs to monitor consistent RC implementation among staff
34. Workshops and group discussions are needed to remind and refresh implementation efforts
35. I would advise educators to continually reflect on their RC implementation efforts and be open to growth
36. Administration should become trained in RC components
37. I feel it is on the teacher to implement not the administrator
38. Time invested in the first six weeks of school will pay off in the end
39. RC is not a “once in a while” thing
40. Once RC is part of your teaching it becomes second nature

Appendix F

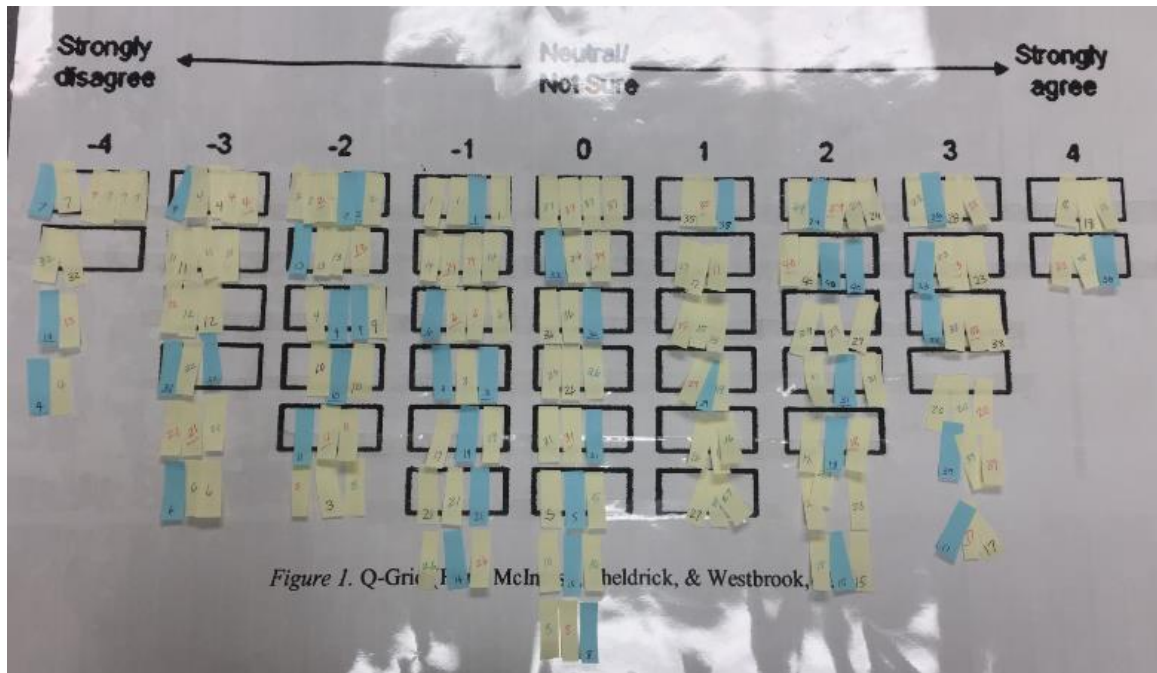


Figure 1. Q-Grid. From McInerney, Heldrick, & Westbrook, 2015.

APPENDIX G

February 5, 2018

Dr. Karen Larwin, Principal Investigator
Ms. Tammy Mild, Co-investigator
Department of Counseling, School Psychology & Educational Leadership
UNIVERSITY

RE: HSRC PROTOCOL NUMBER: 084-2018
TITLE: Teacher Perspective of Responsive Classroom

Dear Dr. Larwin and Ms. Mild:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the abovementioned protocol and determined that it is exempt from full committee review based on a DHHS Category 2 exemption.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,



Mr. Michael Hripko
Associate Vice President for Research
Authorized Institutional Official

MAH:cc

c: Dr. Jake Protivnak, Chair
Department of Counseling, School Psychology & Educational Leadership



March 13, 2018

Dr. Karen Larwin, Principal Investigator
Ms. Tammy Mild, Co-investigator
Department of Counseling, School Psychology and Educational Leadership
UNIVERSITY

RE: HSRC PROTOCOL NUMBER: 131-2018
TITLE: A Study of Elementary Educators' Perception and Experiences Related to
the Implementation Process of the Responsive Classroom Approach

Dear Dr. Larwin and Ms. Mild:

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the abovementioned protocol and determined that it is exempt from full committee review based on a DHHS Category 2 exemption.

Any changes in your research activity should be promptly reported to the Institutional Review Board and may not be initiated without IRB approval except where necessary to eliminate hazard to human subjects. Any unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects should also be promptly reported to the IRB.

The IRB would like to extend its best wishes to you in the conduct of this study.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Hripko
Associate Vice President for Research
Authorized Institutional Official

MAH:cc

c: Dr. Jake Protivnak, Chair
Department of Counseling, School Psychology and Educational Leadership

